

A
C R I T I C A L
R E V I E W
O F T H E
WORKS of DR SAMUEL JOHNSON,
R
C O N T A I N I N G
A particular VINDICATION of several eminent
CHARACTERS.

Stultorum plena sunt omnia.

ERASMUS.

The errors of a favourite writer should be particularly attended to,
as their passing current may have the worst of consequences.

ENGLISH REVIEW.

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C R I T I C A L

R E V I E W

O F T H E

W O R K S O F D R S A M U E L J O H N S O N

L O N D O N

A P A R T I C U L A R V I E W O F T H E O R I G I N A L
P E R S O N S



PRINTED BY T. C. BARNES, 11, ST. MARK'S LANE, E.C. 4.

The editor of a literary work should be particularly attentive to
the accuracy of the facts and figures which he introduces.
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S E C O N D E D I T I O N

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W O R K S O F D R S A M U E L J O H N S O N

INTRODUCTION.

BOOKBUILDERS form a very singular species of beings. Perhaps, of all men living, they have the least respect or attachment to the rest of their profession. Like the gladiators of antient Rome, the most of them subsist only by destroying each other. Yet, in the midst of this mutual and infinite havoc, their generation continues to multiply. The deepest wound is never deadly. The vanquished combatant may rise again, when he pleases, and renew the battle.

The author of the present trifle was last year induced to publish a few remarks on the writings of Dr Samuel Johnson. The quotations were correct and copious. The conclusions severe but plausible; that the Doctor often contradicts himself, and still oftener contradicts truth; that his bosom is the native soil of animosity; that, in the true spirit of a mercantile author, his pen blackens every species of merit, which can admit of a comparison with his own; that, to detect and to display his ill-nature, his ignorance, and his inconsistency, is an useful, a necessary, and even a generous action.

By the publick, the observations were received, on both sides of Tweed, with some degree of notice. By men of learning, they were justified in the strongest terms; and by none more zealously than the late Lord Kaimes. The world are acquainted with his extensive knowledge, and his correct taste. His rivals in literary fame have more than once attested, that his *Elements of Criticism* form the compleatest and most philosophical treatise on that subject which is to be found in any language. The rapid circulation of his performance around the rest of Europe, has contributed to confirm their applause. They can therefore determine, in what degree his Lordship was qualified to decide on the propriety of such a publication as the present.

A very learned, pious and benevolent prelate of the Church of England, who died lately, has left behind him a few remarks on our author; they cannot fail to come home with peculiar force to the bosom of the reader. Bishop Newton
says,

says, " That Dr Johnson's lives of English poets afforded him
 " amusement ; but candour was much hurt, and offended at
 " the malevolence which predominates in every part. Some
 " passages, it must be allowed, are judicious and well written,
 " but make not sufficient compensation for so much spleen and
 " ill-humour. Never was any biographer more sparing of his
 " praises, or more abundant in his censures. He seemingly de-
 " lights more in exposing blemishes, than in recommending
 " beauties ; slightly passes over excellencies, enlarges upon
 " imperfections, and, not content with his own severe reflec-
 " tions, revives old scandal, and produces large quotations
 " from the long forgotten works of former critics. His re-
 " putation was so high in the republic of letters, that it wanted
 " not to be raised upon the ruin of others. But these essays,
 " instead of raising a higher idea than was before entertained
 " of his understanding, have certainly given the world a worse
 " opinion of his temper. The Bishop was, therefore, the
 " more surprised and concerned for his townsman, for he re-
 " spected him not only for his genius and learning, but valued
 " him much more for the more amiable part of his character,
 " his humanity and charity, his morality and religion. *Lenit*
 " *albestens animos capillus*, as Horace says. Old age should
 " lenify, should soften men's manners, and make them more
 " mild and gentle ; but often it has the contrary effect, hardens
 " their hearts, and renders them more sour and crabbed. The
 " panegyrist of Savage in his youth, nay in his old age, be-
 " come the satirist of the most favourite authors ; in both cases
 " alike to be blamed, his encomium as unjust and undeserved as
 " his censures."

In a work lately published by Mr Callander of Craigforth,
 that gentleman (Introduction, p. 7.) observes, " That had the
 " laborious Johnson been better acquainted with the oriental
 " tongues, or had he even understood the first rudiments of the
 " northern languages from which the English and Scots derive
 " their origin, his bulky volumes had not presented to us the
 " melancholy truth, that unwearied industry, *devoid of settled*
 " *principles*, avails only to add one error to another." Mr
 Whitaker's opinion on the same topick is couched in politer
 terms, but amounts nearly to the same conclusion, viz. That
 Dr Johnson was very deficient in the qualifications essential to

an etymologist. The King of Prussia, in his memoirs, affirms, " That the labours of an etymologist are trifles *beneath the notice of a man of sense.*" Dr Johnson has studied trifles, and studied them without success.

" The basis of all excellence is truth ;" and if it shall be found that truth is the basis of this pamphlet, nobody will attempt to censure it as uncandid or useless. " Nothing" says Montesquieu, " is a greater obstacle to our progress in knowledge, than a bad performance by a celebrated author, because, before we instruct, we must begin with undeceiving." Like the former essay, these pages will endeavour to ascertain the genuine importance of Dr Johnson's literary character; to point out his precious principles of poetical taste, and the frequent absurdity of his moral maxims; to vindicate the memories of many eminent men from his invidious accusations; and, from the wilderness of flowers that blossom in his immortal Dictionary, to gather a garland for his venerable brow.

When you recollect the profusion of panegyrick which has been showered on his head, and observe the wretched pedantry which corrupts the volumes of his imitators, you must feel a peculiar pleasure in tracing the progress of his downfall. But you will pity that ignorance which involves him in a sea of errors, that species of madness which hurries him into a million of contradictions, that feeble capacity which cannot grasp a great thought, that stupid affectation of completeness which descends to the definition of a f--t, and that avarice insensible to shame, which swells a pocket volume to the size of folios, and demands four guineas for a book too dear of ten shillings. Nothing is more insignificant or uncertain than reputation when founded on imaginary merit. Oppressed by such a mass of errors, one loses all temptation to invent the deformities which he cannot find, or expose each petty fault with petulant exultation. From a subject so humble, a critick can hardly hope to gain either importance or reputation. He is not to exercise his abilities, if he has any, but his fingers.

Our language is long since overloaded with books of criticism. Every superfluous book is an imposition on the publick. Every bad author is, on that account, a publick robber. In apology for the present essay, it may be said, that all men have

an equal title to tell their sentiments; that, in the less room they can do it, so much the better; and, that the entire works of Dr Johnson are above an hundred times dearer, and three hundred times larger, than the following pages.

If the reader shall think that severe language has been any where adopted, let him listen to the words of a critick, whose deep penetration and majestick eloquence, have often commanded the admiration of mankind.

“ It is painful, (says Dr Stuart) to reprobate performances of any kind. But the purposes of the critical art can only be answered, by setting forth the truth. And though authors are to be offended, the public is to gain. Perhaps it even gains most, when criticism, finding it necessary to be rigorously exact, assumes her severest note, and her keenest indignation; when, surveying with contempt the arrogant pretender to knowledge, she records his claims and insignificance, holds out, in the hideousness of contrast, his pride and his folly, and, forcing conviction into every mind, teaches even his friends to acknowledge, that her censures, though fatally blasting, are strikingly just; when, humbling his presumption, exposing his ignorance, and eyeing with scorn his weakness, she lays forever in ruins a reputation once great by grimace, affectation and deceit; and, when calling aloud to the astonished, the detected, and the mortified culprit, she bids him know the burnings of shame, and the anguish of disappointment.”

E R R A T A.

Page 19. line 8. from the top, *dele* is.

Page 20. line 6. from the top, read *alteration*.

Page 25. line 15. from the bottom, read *Extracts* from Prince Arthur.

Page 28. line 10. from the bottom, read *one* ingenious philosopher.

Page 36. line 23. from the top, read *dancers*.

Page 40. line 17. from the top, *dele* the reference.

Page 48. line 14. from the bottom, *dele* and.

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CRITICAL REVIEW, &c.

S E C T. I.

OF Prior's Tales, "The numbers are smooth, *without appearance of care*†." This is very true, but it does not agree with what follows: "His expression has every mark of laborious study. The line seldom seems to have been formed at once," &c. Prior's mythological fictions about Venus and Cupid, "are surely *despicable*." Others of his pieces are said to be, "all *puerile* and *unaffected*; and yet *more despicable* is the long tale told by Lewis," &c. In spite of all this we are assured, "that Prior had such rectitude of judgement as secured him from every thing that approached to the ridiculous or absurd." We can hardly say as much for Dr Johnson; and again, "Prior is never *low*." At least he is never quite so *low* as to be comparable with this critic.

"Of Prior's verse what is smooth is not soft." An explanation of this line is requested.

"Scarce any *one* of our poets has written so much, and translated so little" as Prior. The works of Thomson, in size, at least, far exceed those of Prior. But he has translated not a single line. The father of our drama was not qualified for such a task. Butler and Milton might possibly disdain it. The seraphick muse of Young could not descend to creep in the trammels of translation. Defoe and Churchill so far despised the practice of poaching for other men's ideas, that they seem almost to have written more than they have read. Many other names might easily be selected to shew the absurdity of our author's opinion.

He gives a pretty full account of *The Old Batchelor*, *Love for Love*, and *The Mourning Bride*. Forgetting what he had said about them, he adds, a little after, "Of Congreve's plays I cannot speak *distinctly*," though he must often have seen them acted. And as the climax of his inconsistencies proceeds in the very same page to sum up their general character in a criticism perspicuous, elegant, and just.

"The life that passes in *penury* must necessarily pass in obscurity. "It is impossible to trace Fenton from year to year." But Dryden was at least as penurious as Fenton, though some of the first nobility

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† To avoid a parade of useless quotations, the reader is requested to observe in general, that when any passage is quoted concerning an English poet, it will be found in Dr Johnson's account of his life and writings, unless expressly cited from some other book.

in England were desirous of his conversation. The life of Pope did not pass in obscurity, when he was so *penurious*, that he was in want of money even to buy books. Dr Johnson states this to have happened about 1713, and it reflects infinite disgrace on his "*noble friends*." Socrates was sufficiently famous when his *penury* would not permit him to buy a cloak! A million of such stories could be collected. We have been the same selfish vermin in all ages; and during the same period, poets have been singing, philosophers explaining, and simpletons relying on the benefits of friendship.

Dr Johnson gives a general description of the style of Swift; and observes, that such a style "*instructs, but does not persuade*." This last was the most unfortunate word he could have hit upon; for Swift was eminently successful in the art of *persuasion*. The Doctor had told us a little before, that, in England for a time, and in Ireland for life, the Dean DICTATED the political sentiments of the people. In reviewing this Reviewer, we are often at a loss which to admire most, the folly of his censures, or the violence of his contradictions.

Dr Swift's "*practice of saving became by degrees ridiculous, and at last detestable*." This is certainly very harsh language. But in the next line the Doctor adds, "*that his avarice was never suffered to inroad upon his virtue*." The Universities of Oxford and Dublin, as a testimony of their sense of his merits, have made our author a Master of Arts, and a Doctor of Laws. The Rambler, with all the members of both these Universities at his back, will not easily prove, that a man whose virtues are *unimpaired*, can be an object of *detestation*.

The Dean, in a letter printed since his death, affirms, in the plainest terms, that he was born in Ireland. In memoirs left behind him in manuscript, he repeats the same circumstance. Yet the "*great Biographer*" observes, that *he delighted to involve this question in obscurity*.

If you have read Dr Swift's letter to the Earl of Oxford, Dr Johnson's account of it will put your patience to a trial. The Dean despised and boasted of despising that strutting dignity of expression so much admired by the Rambler. This may have provoked him to pass a negative censure on Swift's progress in Philology.

As a political writer, Dr Johnson has been altogether unfortunate. In that line of authorship, the success of Swift was perhaps without any parallel. And as eunuchs are said to dislike children, because they can have none of their own, so the virtuous pensioner may be supposed to look up with envy towards that eminence which he cannot ascend; and this will account for the wildest of all his eccentricities, the mist which he attempts to spread over Swift's political splendour. "With regard to wit, I am afraid none of Swift's papers will be found equal to those by which Addison opposed him." In a future page the reader will find some hints on this subject.

We are told that Swift was popular *a-while*, by lending small sums to the poor without interest. But, "The day was often broken; and the loan was not repaid.—Swift had made no provision of patience or pity. He ordered his debtors to be sued. A severe creditor has no popular character; what then was likely to be said of him who employs the catch-pole under the pretence of charity? The clamour against him was loud, and the populace outrageous; he was therefore forced to drop his scheme, and own the folly of expecting punctuality from the poor."

To be ready in "owning his follies," was no prominent feature in the surly tyrannical character of the Hibernian Cato †. Dr Johnson says, that Hawkesworth has written Swift's life with great diligence and acuteness. Yet that author speaks not a word of this affair. The calumniator, cites no proof, but elsewhere observes, that "Swift was the oracle of the traders, and the IDOL of the rabble," which can scarcely be reconciled with *the loud outrageous clamour* said to be raised against him. Some readers may think that the Doctor, whose happy *invention* has been highly celebrated, had recourse to that faculty in framing the story. But one of his admirers has assured me, from his own personal knowledge and experience, that he is convinced the Doctor would be every whit as incapable, as he himself is, of writing any thing which is not true. He believes the whole narrative; as well as he and all the rest of the world believe that Hambden was a rebel; that Milton was a forger; that Pope was a sincere papist; that Addison was a mean deliberate liar ‡; that every Scotchman is born a liar; that every man who disliked the war with America was a traitor to England; that Fingal never existed; and that there is only one tree in the county of Fife!

In many passages of Swift's life, he is entirely deserted by those glimmerings of candour and common sense which he has displayed in more fortunate productions. Reader! I have too much respect for thine understanding to vindicate the Tale of a Tub, which this miserable bigot intitles a "wild work; charity may be persuaded to think that it might be written by a man of a peculiar character, without ill intention, but it is certainly of dangerous example."

Dr James Beattie has railed a good deal to the same purpose. Great and wonderful are the works of Grubstreet! What can we adduce against such venerable authorities? When the victorious Nadir Shaw had ascended the throne of Persia, his mother told him, that *she* thought he should resign it. "Perhaps," (said Nadir) "if I were *an old woman*, I might think so too." The story of Smalridge was not worth its room.

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† Yet in correcting his works he was remarkably patient of advice, and once at least he condescended to consult his footmen.—A very proper *memento* to some *impeccable* pedants.

‡ Vide Dr Johnson's life of Tickell.

The insulted reader, in the midst of his indignation, is obliged to hear a violent inuendo, that Swift was first guilty of plagiarism, and then vindicated his theft by telling a lie. Let Dr Johnson quote *Combat des Livres*. Let him produce the pilfered passages, and then, and not till then, he may deserve a hearing.

What Dr Johnson hath so happily remarked of Chevy Chase, may be applied to his account of Swift. Unless when excited by his innate candour, "there is not much of bombast or affectation, but "there is chill and lifeless imbecillity. The story cannot possibly "be told in a manner that shall make *less* impression on the mind †."

"Pope's revenue, certain and casual, amounted *only* to eight hundred pounds a-year †." The Idler's ideas of money have altered "since he stood candidate for a school worth sixty pounds a-year.

He talks so big, to let us see the pride
With which exalted pedants always ride.

The proprietor of such a fortune as Pope's, must live without many of those splendid but insignificant superfluities, the possession of which constitutes the capital enjoyment of the great. He perhaps cannot afford to buy those waggon loads of books which Dr A. never looks into, and my Lord B. is not able to read. At an election for Old Sarum, his revenue will not purchase *the* single vote. Perhaps it is beyond his power to pay the Man of Fashion's bill with his taylor, the good honest fellow's arrears in a tavern, or the man of honour's debts at a gaming table. He cannot, like some of our nobility, supply a pack of hounds every day with clean wholesome victuals; nor, like Louis of France, afford annually to buy nine hundred pairs of breeches ‖. But though he did none of all these things, Dr Swift has taught the world what may be done on an income of *less* than L. 800. Though in debt when he came to the Deanery, yet he was able to bestow half his salary in the most judicious modes of charity. He left twelve thousand pounds behind him for the erection of an hospital. His excellent life affords more instruction than even his excellent writings. Behold, now, the author of the Rambler advancing in all the majesty of an unknown tongue to tell us, that though Swift washed himself with oriental *scrupulosity*, his face never looked clean; that he relieved without pity, and assisted without kindness; that those whom he fed could hardly love him; to speak with affected disdain of "his little accumulations;" and to bid us remember, that with all this talk of his generosity, Swift was never rich.—Four hundred pages filled with such "critical observations," are a great deal too dear of six or seven shillings.

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† Life of Addison. ‡ Life of Pope —He adds, "It would be hard to find a "man so well entitled to notice by his wit, that ever delighted so much in talking of his money." || This article of royal magnificence is mentioned in some letters lately translated from the French.

Dr Johnson says, "temporary ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I suppose, justly be derided as the fumes of imagination †." A little after, speaking of the same subject, he expresses himself thus: "Yet something of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental ‡." How are we to reconcile these opposite opinions, and why should we continue to contradict an author so diligent in contradicting himself.

Denham "made a metrical version of the Psalms of David. In this attempt he has failed; but in sacred poetry who has succeeded?" Pope, Addison, Watts, Mrs Rowe, &c.

Dr Johnson affirms, "That though another Butler should arise, another Hudibras would not obtain the same regard." A fortunate imitator of Butler has, of all poets, the fairest chance for a multitude of admirers. Dr Swift was so sensible of this, that we are assured by Mrs Pilkington, he had Hudibras entirely by heart; and no verses are more generally read or better understood than his.

Speaking of Mr Gray, the Doctor observes, "that to say he has no beauties would be unjust." This is very ambiguous approbation, and reminds us of a parson's funeral sermon on a lady who died at the age of One hundred and five: "For the last thirty years of her life she was an eminent instance of CHASTITY."

He remarks, that a poem of Gray's is "at once poetical and rational." This is nothing wonderful; but it will perhaps be out of the Critick's power to point out a performance, at once poetical and nonsensical. He himself has told us §, "that from poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension, and elevation of his fancy;" so that reason, propriety, and truth, are the basis of the highest poetical beauties. Outrageous nonsense, and genuine sublimity, are, for once, at least, happily blended in the menace of an American madman.—"As for you, Jonathan Hewson, I'll pulverize you, you dog; I'll scatter your atoms through the infinity of space, till it shall puzzle OMNISCIENCE to find you out, and OMNIPOTENCE to put you together again."

S E C T. II.

A Memoir of Dr Johnson's life and writings was lately printed in some of the magazines. Its author begins by telling us, "That this excellent writer, who is no less the glory of the present age and nation, than he will be the admiration of all succeeding ones, was the son of a bookseller." He proceeds to observe, 1st, "That all Dr Johnson's prose is *poetry*," an affirmation which, he who comprehends

† Life of Milton.

‡ Ibid.

§ Waller's Life.

comprehends it, may admit if he please. 2d, "That the Rambler
 "alone is at least equal, if not superior, to the Spectator and Tatler."
 This position will be violently disputed by the admirers of Mr Addison.
 The elegance of our language, and the true state of human life,
 are infinitely better displayed in the World, than in the Rambler,
 which is in fact a wilderness of beauties and absurdities, a singular
 monument of genius, deformed by affectation. 3d, "That in verse
 "Dr Johnson's numbers approach nearer to Mr Pope's manner of
 "versification than that of any other writer." This critic, like many
 others, appears to write at random. The reader, who may have per-
 used the verses of Brown, Garrick, Pitt, Loyd, Churchill, Goldsmith,
 and Hayley, will observe, that every one of these writers imitates Mr
 Pope's manner, and rivals or eclipses the melody of Dr Johnson.
 Yet this candid and intelligent panegyrist sacrifices them without ce-
 remony on the altar of his favourite hero. 4th, "That he greatly
 "excells any of the oriental writers, in the fertility of his invention,
 "the conduct of his plots, and the justice and strength of his senti-
 "ments." When the critick shall prove that he is master of Turkish,
 Arabick, and Chinese, and that he has read in these languages; those
 writers whom he pretends to under-value, it may be worth while to
 tell him that his opinion is very ill-founded, and that he may find
 evidence of its being so in every circulating library †." 5th, That on
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† It is more shameful than surprising, that oriental literature should have been
 so much neglected as it is in England. Forty years ago; Mr Frazer published
 a catalogue of two hundred manuscripts, which he had purchased at a consider-
 able expence, in the East Indies. Where are they deposited? Why are they
 not translated? Men of learning too often affect to despise the task of translat-
 ing; but the horse which is unfit for the turf, may be fit for the dray. The
 professors of Oxford and Cambridge have almost nothing else to do, or, which is
 the same thing, they do very little else. One of these volumes is said to contain
 the maxims of Aurungzebe; a conqueror more eminent and more fortunate than
 Augustus Cæsar. A wiser, and, it is possible, a better man than the libidinous
 son of David, he did not consume the flower of his days in the embraces of
 women. He deceived the vigilance of a jealous father, who, like himself, had
 ascended the throne through the blood of his family. By policy, and by per-
 sonal valour, he vanquished his intrepid competitors for empire. Like Crom-
 well, he combined and displayed, in his own person, a respect for justice,
 with the guilt of usurpation, the virtues, abilities, and vices of a legislator, a
 fanatick, and a hero. The precepts of so profound a genius would surely
 form an instructive volume: They might perhaps afford more rational amuse-
 ment to the mind of a philosopher, than a ramble round the globe in search of
 useless weeds. But alas! in learning, as in dress, every thing is governed by the
 fashion; for example, when a long lost page of Livy was lately found in the Va-
 tican, all Europe resounded with acclamations of joy on the important discovery.
 Such a burst of success was evidently too big for the brain of the discoverer. In
 the first agonies of exultation he remarked, that his happiness did not arise
 from his own personal merit in the affair, but from the renown which was to be
 reflected on his native city!

We continue to read the Arabian Tales through the medium of a translation
 from a French paraphrase. The great and inimitable Dr Beattie, in a large
 book just published, declares, that he cannot learn whether they are the inven-

the publication of "that stupenduous undertaking," Dr Johnson's dictionary, "the honours paid him by several of the foreign Academies, particularly by the *Accademia della Crusca*,"—discover the extreme insignificance of their approbation. 6th, "That our author never was known to descend from himself till he became a *political* writer. When talents, designed for the support of religion and truth, are *prostituted* to the defence of royal and ministerial errors, who is not ready to exclaim with Pistol, *Then did the sun on dung-hill shine!*" And who is not ready, as well as this charitable commentator, to believe, that the said political prostitute "seems possessed of the very best heart now existing." In this writer's ideas there is no principle of union. 7th, "That Dr Johnson has written only one dramatic piece, the success of which was not equal to its merit." Few can be intitled to controvert this assertion; for the Doctor's tragedy had a tragical fate. An eminent bookseller declared that he had never once heard of such a play. The first edition will "not easily be found." The second will perhaps eke out some collection of classical curiosities in the nineteenth century. 8th, "That our present theatrical audiences pay no great regard either to character, language, or sentiment." What mode of correction does such an author deserve? 9th, "That the excellence of Dr Johnson's lives of English poets is powerful enough to extinguish even the indignation which his political tenets may *sometimes* have excited." This gentleman is, I think, said to be descended from Daniel Defoe. If the great hofier could arise from his grave, and read the performance

tion of Galland, or actually translated from an Arabian original. A Persian Grammar has been in the hands of the public, and in high reputation for several years. In that book this profound Doctor will find the famous story of *Alam-ashcar*. The original text is printed in an oriental character, with a literal translation, that shews how far Galland has deviated from the Eastern author. An accurate version of that book would serve to illustrate the great science of human nature.

It is now at least six years since Kennicott's Hebrew Bible made its appearance. Every page is divided into two columns. The one contains the text selected from the best manuscripts, and the other the most respectable variations. England abounds with men capable of translating this invaluable production. Yet so long a period has elapsed without a work of that kind appearing: a few partial publications have crept into existence, but except Dr Lowth, perhaps no man has acquired high reputation, by any performance of that nature, and even his work includes only a very small part of the Holy Scriptures. The clergy of England may suppose themselves better employed in ascertaining the eternity of hell torments; in defining the nature and essence of the divinity; in admiring the profane arguments of the British-Roman historian; in extorting their tithes from dissenters; and in silencing the bishop of Landaff. But the inquisitive philosopher, and the devout Christian, wait with equal impatience for a complete translation of Dr Kennicott's work, with all the various readings. Our national negligence in this affair is astonishing. When a Buccaneer has sailed round the globe in search of a chest of gold, he will not, upon his arrival at home, forget to break it open.

All these circumstances display the importance of Oriental literature, and the shameful neglect of it in this Island,

ance now quoted, he would not perhaps be very proud of his posterity.

Non tali auxilio nec defensoribus istis,
Tempus eget. —

Dr Johnson often seems to write merely that he may expose his own want of experience. "I cannot but think (he says) that impartiality " may be expected with equal confidence from him that relates the " passages of *his own life*, as from him that delivers the transactions " of another *." That is to say, *In a court of law the party's own evidence ought to be depended upon as far as that of any other witness whatever.* The reader will be able to determine the justice of this idea; and he will also, perhaps, understand the author's meaning in the following passage: "My son entered the shop before it was " opened †."

"A writer who obtains his full purpose, loses himself in his own " lustre ‡." Or, in other words, *The greater the success which attends the publication of a book, the greater chance there is that its author will be forgotten.* A repeated perusal of the whole page will convince you that this is exactly the notion which the Doctor wishes to communicate.

In telling a story, our author is not always consistent. Thus he expresses a hope "that Mrs Cowley lived to see her son fortunate, " and partook his posterity." This leads us to listen for an account of his descendants, but Mr Cowley was never married, nor have we heard of his natural children.

"We find in Cato innumerable beauties, which enamour us of its " author, but we see NOTHING that acquaints us with human " sentiments, or human actions. Its hopes and fears communicate " no vibration to the heart §;" or, in plainer words, we are enamoured without being affected, i. e. we are affected without being affected. When the Doctor is to utter the most candid and self-evident criticism, his period flows in the mildest and most persuasive tone. The tragedy of Cato is the peculiar favourite of "the petty mind of Voltaire," and has extended the reputation of the English theatre. The Doctor has not forgotten the fate of his *Irene*; and mental weakness is the parent of envy. He obviously wishes to sink the work of Addison to a level with his own; and in that gentleman's life, he has reprinted from Mr Dennis more than twenty pages of very bitter criticism on the conduct of the plot of Cato: and adds, "That if the jests of " Dennis are coarse, his arguments are strong."

"What voice, or what gesture, can hope to add dignity or force to " the soliloquy of Cato ||." Enquire at Mr Sheridan, or Mr Digges ¶. The following quotation contains a capital stroke.

To

* Idler, No 84. † Ibid, No 95. ‡ Life of Dryden. § Preface to Shakespeare. || Ibid. ¶ The Nintietth Idler proceeds on a similar idea, and contains nothing beyond the reach of very moderate abilities.

" To be humane, generous, and candid, is a very high degree of merit in any case; but those (for *these*) qualities deserve still greater praise, when they are found in *that* condition, which makes almost every other man contemptuous, insolent, petulant, selfish, and brutal *."

Can you conjecture what class of men the Doctor refers to. Is it the "Scribblers for a party; or is it the commissioners of Excise. No—It is neither. Nor is it buffoons, bailiffs, turnkeys, drummers, highwaymen, nor hangmen! Where shall we find the race of monsters? Would you have suspected that the Doctor's bosom friend and benefactor, Mr Garrick, was connected with so vile a banditti. Indeed the Doctor is very wide of the fact; the greatest actors and actresses of the present century have many of them been fully as eminent for the goodness of their dispositions, as for the brilliancy of their genius. Some serious people, by affecting to despise this profession, have taught the actors to despise it. And, as he who pays no respect to himself, can pay very little respect to others, abuses have multiplied both on the stage and behind the scenes. But they have originated for the most part from the impertinent zeal of the pious.

"Tragedy is always less powerful on the theatre than in the page †." He who has only seen the players of Edinburgh, may be pardoned for thinking, that he feels more pleasure in perusing a play, than in seeing it acted. But, when Garrick, for the last time, performed the part of Lear, there was not a single dry cheek in the House. The actor rose to a level with the divine poet. No heart could evade the magic of his eye. The torrent of sympathy swept every thing before it. Even the ladies who represented his daughters, were dissolved in tears. They could neither resist nor conceal the omnipotent impulse of sorrow. At such a scene, spectators have sometimes fainted; but no such dangerous effect arises from a perusal in the closet. The Doctor's opinion is so exceedingly ill-founded, that no words can exaggerate its absurdity.

It is surely very odd, that a man of Dr Johnson's taste should, either sleeping or waking, tell us, "That Shenstone, had his mind been better stored with knowledge, *could certainly have been agreeable*." He has pleased many; but the Doctor, it would appear, is not of that number. "His diction is often harsh, improper, and affected; his words *ill-coined*, ‡, ill-chosen, and his phrase unskilfully inverted; his humour is sometimes gross, and seldom spritely." Of these accusations no evidence is adduced. What he says of the famous Pastoral Ballad will be perused with little profit and less patience. In summing up Mr Shenstone's character, the critick has not taken the least notice of his prose, which is elegant and sensible; but he men-

B

tions

* Life of Savage. In the preceding sentence the Doctor repeats the same idea, and softens it with a *perhaps*. † Preface to Shakespeare.

‡ Do you recollect any words of Mr Shenstone's coining?

tions every circumstance which can make that gentleman appear in a mean ridiculous light. What he is afraid to say himself, he quotes from the posthumous letters of Mr Gray, which were betrayed to the publick eye, without proper corrections, by the petulant, selfish editor. For what Dr Johnson says about Lord Lyttleton and his family †, he gives no authority, except his own; and perhaps he is pretty much in the situation of that Knight in the play, *who swore by his honour, broke his oath, and yet was not perjured!*

As Mr Hammond's elegies had been recommended to the world, by the late Earl of Chesterfield, they could expect no quarter from the Doctor. We are accordingly told, "That Hammond has few sentiments drawn from nature, and few images from modern life. He produces nothing but frigid pedantry. It would be hard to find, in all his productions, three stanzas that deserve to be remembered. His verses are not rugged, but they have no sweetness, &c." The opinion of the public is very different; nor has the Doctor been able to persuade us "That these elegies have neither passion, nature, nor manners." On the passages now quoted, somebody has found leisure to write an eighteen penny pamphlet, to which the curious are referred.

Poets "borrow every thing from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature, or from life ‡." Did Shakespeare borrow every thing from his predecessors? The sentence seems not a little inconsistent; for, if A. has received *every thing* which he possesses from B. it is evident that he has derived *no* part of his possessions from C. or D. The Doctor deviates widely from the idea with which he sets out. But it is *not true*, that a poet of genius, "derives very little from life or nature;" and none but a man of genius deserves the title of poet. I am now to cite a passage which is brilliant beyond example.—"Let future ages hear it and admire!"

In his account of Boerhaave, he says, "It is, I believe, a very just observation, that men's ambition is generally proportioned to their capacity. Providence seldom sends any into the world with an inclination to attempt great things, who have not abilities likewise to perform them." The sum of the whole is, "*That our ambition and vanity are very seldom inferior to our capacity and good sense.*" How seldom this maxim holds it is needless to tell. Some truths are too evident for illustration. Affirm that two and two make ten; the utmost eloquence of mankind cannot go farther than to bid you count your fingers. The majesty of reason would be degraded by condescending to reply, when Dr Johnson ingeniously affirms, That a man is not a beast: That Maidenhead—Maidenhood—Maidenhode, is *virginity*: That a whore is a strumpet: That fire is the *igneous* element: That chymistry is philosophy by *fire*: That water consists of *porous* particles: That a theorem is an *axiom*: That a periwig is *adscititious* hair: That *one* is less than *two*, and that *three* is

† Life of Shenstone.

‡ Life of Dryden.

is *two* and *one*: That whig is the name of a *faction*: That thunder is a *most bright flame*: And, That Grubstreet is "a street in London much inhabited by the writers of *Dictionaries*." When we read all this nonsense, and the merit of the work is uniform throughout, what can we do but laugh at its author as well as at OURSELVES, for having admired, as the utmost effort of the human understanding, a performance which is absolutely beneath contempt. To his own rule the Doctor forms at least is *one* eminent exception. His inclination to undertake, exceeds his abilities to perform. "I have *attempted* (says the meritorious pensioner) to write a Dictionary of the English language †." The design was noble, but the expression of *attempting* was highly proper. He seems to be scarce capable of an *effort*.

In the following passage the reader will observe how this supercilious pedant spits his impotent venom on the nobility of England.

Mr Pope's "Admiration of the great seems to have increased in the advance of life.—To his latter works, he took care to annex names dignified with titles, but was not very happy in his choice; for except Lord Bathurst, NONE of his noble friends were such as that a good man would wish to have his intimacy with them known to posterity: he can derive little honour from the notice of Cobham, Burlington, or Bolingbroke." These were not the only noble friends of Mr Pope. Dr Johnson himself has recorded his intimacy with the Earls of Oxford and Orrery. An imitation of Horace, is addressed to Mr Murray, now Earl of Mansfield. Was it dishonourable to be connected with the great Earl of Peterborough.

—"He whose lightening pierc'd th' Iberian lines,
Now forms my quincunx, and now ranks my vines;
Or tames the genius of the stubborn plain,
Almost as quickly as he conquer'd Spain."

The Earl of Chesterfield was intimate with Pope; and the Doctor has told us, that he himself looked upon his Lordship's patronage as "an unexpected *distinction* ‡." The Earl of Marchmont was one of his executors. Were all these noble persons of an infamous character? Certainly not. Let the reader examine his own heart, and then say, whether the author and publisher of such candid observations, "seems to possess the very best heart now existing." In an epistle to Arbuthnot, Mr Pope has obliged us with a copious catalogue of his "noble friends;" I shall quote a few lines of it.

"The courtly Talbot, Sheffield, Sommers, read,
Even mitred Rochester would nod the head;
And St John's self (great Dryden's friends before),
With open arms receiv'd one poet more."

"Happy

† Preface to Folio Dictionary —If the reader thinks I give only partial specimens of the Dictionary here, he may consult Deformities, 2d Edition, p. 47 *et seq.*

‡ Letter to the Earl of Chesterfield.

" Happy my studies, when by these approv'd ;
 " Happier their author, when by these belov'd .
 " From these the world will judge of men and books,
 " Not from the *Johnsons*, *Oldmixons* and *Cooks*."

Nobody can doubt, that Pope, were he now alive, would adopt my alterations in the last of these lines. He would do more : He would place the Doctor in an eminent niche in the Temple of Dullness, and bring him into immediate, universal, and well deserved *applause*.

Many other persons of the first rank might be mentioned, who were proud of being esteemed the friends of Mr Pope. But it is false, that even Bolingbroke himself, was a man with whom it was dishonourable to be connected. With the crimes of Cobham and Burlington, the reader is perhaps acquainted, though I am not. In the midst of our astonishment, at this wanton, impudent and unparalleled insult on the British nobility, let us, in his own words, interrogate this " fretful porcupine," " Why HE, whose life is spent in contemplation, and whose business is only to discover truth, should be unable to rectify the fallacies of imagination, or contend against prejudice and passion ; to what end has he read and meditated † ? To which, courteous reader, thou mayest add, " That when a man has once suffered his temper to be thus vitiated, he becomes one of the most " hateful and unhappy beings." Who ever converses with him, lives " with the solicitude of a man that plays with a tame tyger, always " under a necessity of watching the moment in which the capricious " savage shall begin to growl. Nothing can be more despicable, or " more miserable, than the old age of a passionate man ‡." All these fine observations have been made by the mildest and most amiable man in the world. *Risum teneatis amici.*

" Lyttleton now stood in the first rank of opposition ; and Pope, " who had been excited, *it is not easy to say how,* || to increase the clamour against the Ministry, commended him among the other patriots. This drew upon him the reproaches of Fox, who, in the " House, imputed to him, as a crime, his intimacy with a lampooner " so unjust and licentious. Lyttleton supported *his friend*, and replied, that he thought it an honour to be received into the familiarity of so great a poet." But, so *good a man* as Dr Johnson, would not wish to have his intimacy with Lord Lyttleton known to posterity. I have already, more than once, pointed out his particular aversion to that nobleman. In perusing his lives of English poets, our indignation suffers no rest.

The Doctor's style is not celebrated for its perspicuity. The most evident truth imaginable, is obscured with a *perhaps*, or an *I believe*, when the critick himself is the single person who ever entertained a *doubt* upon the subject. I apprehend that the following passage

† Rambler, No. 180. ‡ Ibid, No 11.

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passage comes within this description. "The imitation of Horace, the Verses to Lord Mulgrave, the Satire against Man, the Verses upon Nothing, and perhaps *some others*, are, I believe, genuine, and perhaps most of those which this collection exhibits*."

A fondness for singularity, betrays a littleness of mind. "Per-haps" says Lexiphanes, "no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*." It is more than probable, that the Essay on Man has been read an hundred times as often. The same happy vein of thought led Dr Johnson to believe, that the memoirs of Scriblerus, "had been little read; or, when read, had been forgotten †."

Of the play of Henry VIII. Dr Johnson observes, "That the genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Catharine. *Every other part* may be easily conceived, and easily written ‡." If the critick can easily write such verses as Wolsey's soliloquy, the world would be glad to see them. That passage, in one of his imitations of Juvenal, where he describes the fall of the famous Upstart, is thought by many to be the brightest paragraph in his whole writings; but even *that* is far less affecting than the soliloquy, though the Doctor, as *the freshest modern*, had every imaginable advantage of Shakespeare.

In the life of Mr Thomson, we meet with a variety of new information, viz. "That the author, when at the College, was censured for one of his expressions, as indecent, if not profane: That he courted Aaron Hill with every expression of servile adulation: That he knew no love but that of the sex: That he indulged himself in all the luxury which came within his reach." The Doctor asserts the truth of these circumstances, but he gives no evidence; nor mentions any authority, except that of a man who is long since dead, and, of consequence, we cannot be certain that he ever said so. The story of Mr Quin's relieving the Scottish poet from a Spunging house, "is reported." But, as it was a noble and generous action, the historian flurs it over as fast as possible. He leaves out a still better story of Quin and Thomson, told in the Dramatick Censor. I cannot help observing a circumstance very little to the credit of our countryman. Though liberal in the praise of some *great* men, he has not left one line to commemorate his obligations to this honest Irish player. How could he suppress a burst of gratitude?

"The reader of the Seasons, wonders that *he never saw before*, what Thomson shews him, and that he never yet has felt what Thomson impresses." Almost every man must have seen before, what Thomson shews him. The poet only illustrates, and impresses more forcibly the native feelings of the heart. We have all been delighted with the wild and sublime beauties of nature; we admire the variety of the seasons; attend to the melody of the birds; join in the exultation of the reapers; fly from the bursting of a thunder cloud; and shiver in the winter storm.

The

* Life of Rochester. † Pope's Life. ‡ Notes on Henry VIII.

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The

* Life of Rocheller. † Pope's Life. ‡ Notes on Henry VIII.

The Doctor speaks with apparent satisfaction of the fate of Thomson's poem on Liberty. "Her praises were condemned to harbour spiders, and to gather dust.—Liberty, when it first appeared, I tried to read, and soon desisted. I have never tried again, and therefore will not hazard either praise or censure." This passage will provoke your gravity.

Dr Johnson very justly complains, that the style of Thomson is not sufficiently clear and simple †; but he talks in the most tender terms, for the name of Thomson is very popular. In perhaps every page of the Seasons, you will find words which a common reader cannot understand, and which are not to be met with in Pope or Dryden; and some persons are still so old fashioned, as to think that *their* style is yet the only true standard of poetical language. At the end of the last century, the English world run mad after Cowley's pindarick jargon. In the present, Blank Verse is the fashion. The language of poetry is corrupted by pedants who cannot rhyme. They affect to despise the vigorous and elegant simplicity of Swift. They deplore Dryden's want of taste, and to fill up the measure of absurdity, one critick has asked, If Pope was a poet. Our author's objections to blank verse, deserve the greatest regard.

Dr Johnson severely censures Cowley for having written love-verses, when he was not in love. And by the same rule he might have censured Mr Gay for writing the character of Macheath, when he was *not* going to be hanged. "No man needs to be so burdened with life, as to squander it in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences." Cervantes, Shakespeare, and a croud of fine writers, employed the greatest part of their lives in such voluntary dreams. The Doctor himself has squandered a part of his life "in voluntary dreams of fictitious occurrences," *vide* Rasselas, Letters to the Rambler, Visions, Allegories, Tales, &c.

In the life of Addison, malice imposes on us, under the mask of candour and minuteness. We learn, that he wrote a character of Spenser before he had read his work; that he wrote a poem to King William, with "a kind of rhiming introduction;" that he produced an essay on a part of Virgil, which is juvenile, superficial, and uninstruative; that his dedication to the Duchess of Marlborough, was an instance of servile absurdity; that when his tragedy was acted, he did not behave like a man of spirit; that when he writ in the Guardian, &c. he, *with great eagerness*, laid hold on his share of the profits; that when in office in Ireland, he never lowered his fees to his nearest friend; that he reclaimed a loan from Steele by an execution; that of their memorable friendship, the greater praise must be given to Steele; that their friendship ended by his wantonly telling the world, that "little Dicky's trade was to write pamphlets;" that he ridiculed the son of James the Second, on account of his poverty;

† In *Spring*, Mr Thomson speaks of "the groan of agonizing ships," and the passage that contains this vile bombast has been cited as supremely beautiful.

verty; that in 1702, he himself returned to England, *with a meanness of appearance*; that he was a hen-pecked husband; that before his marriage, if not after it, he often sat late and drank too much wine; that Pope was not the only man whom he had insidiously injured; that when on his death-bed, he sent for Gay to beg his pardon for some wrongs he had done him; that Pope left him to be punished *by the remembrance of a crime perpetrated in vain* †.

Almost all these accusations, or insinuations, rest only on the candour of the critick, and the veracity of the historian.—Many will dispute their justice. There is one incontestable circumstance perhaps worse than all those now mentioned, admitting them to be true. In contempt of truth and decency, a volume of the *Spectator* was dedicated to the infamous Earl of Wharton.

The Doctor must have been at no little pains in collecting, or coining, these pitiful stories about Mr Addison. The lives of Pope, Young, Swift, Milton, and several others, are every one of them composed in the very same stile. Of this charge, some irresistible evidences have already been advanced in the progress of these pages, and in a former essay. An attentive reader will easily observe, that Dr Johnson's malignity rises in an exact proportion to the merit of the person of whom he is writing. Blackmore, and some of the minor poets, are handled with abundant humanity. From *their* names, the jealous critick had nothing to fear. And uniform malevolence must have roused and offended the most patient of Dr Johnson's admirers. But his policy descended a great deal deeper. He calumniates, under the mask of admiration. In summing up the literary character of Mr Addison, he rises, (or shall I say sinks) into the most fulsome adulation ‡. He probably expects, that as he has acquired some reputation in the same line of composition, the reader will celebrate his candour and benevolence, and apply these panegyrics to the author of the *RAMBLER*. Duplicity leads to inconsistency. He says, "that the resentment of party has transmitted no charge of any "crime" against Addison; forgetting that he himself had charged him with "*a crime perpetrated in vain*." Yet, while his pages are thus corrupted by falsehoods, and deformed by contradictions, he amply possesses that low cunning suitable to the rest of his character. Observe his cant of sensibility. "It is surely better that caprice, "obstinacy, frolick, and folly, however they might delight in the "description, should be silently forgotten, than that by wanton merriment, and unseasonable detection, a pang should be given to a "widow, a daughter, a brother, or a friend ||." Is it possible, after all this, that the Doctor has laboured more to ruin the reputations of rival wits, than any writer in our language?

Dr Johnson is frequently just as capricious in his approbation as in his contempt. His superlative applause of Dryden's long dialogue
on

† Life of Pope.
"by Tickell," &c.

‡ The passage I refer to begins thus: "It is observed
|| Life of Addison.

on the Drama, will hardly be justified by a perusal of that performance. The Ode on Mrs Killigrew, which he extols as the noblest in our language, is read by nobody. The merit of Waller's Oration is entirely imaginary. He speaks in the fondest terms of some of Addison's political pieces, though Addison was a *Whig*, and he himself is a bitter *Tory*; though these very productions are forgotten by the publick; and though, as Lord Orrery has very justly declared, their author "deviates into a Comedian of the *lowest* kind." Dr Johnson prefers Mr Addison's Examiner to that of Dr Swift, for no apparent reason, and perhaps only for the pleasure of blasting Demosthenian excellence, and contradicting the impartial applauses of the rest of mankind. The Whig Examiner is a performance so extremely contemptible, that one can hardly believe it ever flowed from the chaste and delicate pen of Addison. The purpose of these five papers was to persuade the nation, that they ought to carry on the Continental war; and that if they did not, their trade would be ruined by the French, and themselves enslaved by the House of Stuart, whom the Whig Examiner mentions in the most opprobrious terms. In his memoir of Swift, Dr Johnson attests, in the most explicit language, "that the war was unnecessarily protracted to fill the pockets of Marlborough; that it would have been continued without end, if he could have continued his annual plunder; and, *that all this is no longer doubted.*" It follows of course, that the Whig Examiner was nothing but a bundle of inflammatory falsehoods, which, had their advice been followed, must have led England to ruin. Yet the Doctor affirms, "that every reader, of every party, must now wish for more Whig Examiners." Our author must actually have been inspired by the dæmon of inconsistency. In the preface to his *Present State of the War*, Mr Addison "lays it down as a fixed rule, that no peace is to be made, without an entire disunion of the French and Spanish monarchies." Dr Johnson admits the madness of the war, and the necessity of a peace, and yet mentions the "Present State," as "however judicious." Did you ever hear of such absurdities?

S E C T. III.

IT is entertaining to observe what difficulties some writers are put to in mustering a decent number of words to make up a five shillings volume. By large types, broad margins, and superfine paper, many a costly student literally swells into a *great* author. An eight-penny poem has, by this means, been lately expanded into a mass of paper, for which "the rugged mercantile race" are now demanding a guinea. When the manuscript of a shilling pamphlet, of a moderate size, was lately taken to the press, the Printer remarked, that he had just been throwing off a quarto volume, which, though it contained a less quantity of matter, was advertised at

eight-

eighteen shillings †! But other paths to *greatness* are frequently trode. When a historian arrives at the middle of the second volume, or sometimes when he has only reached the middle of the first, and plainly feels that his faculties are beginning to flag, the reader is immediately reminded "That a selection of *State papers* are necessary to introduce him behind the curtain, and let him into the great springs of action." By this happy expedient, the performance, which, of necessity, must have expired in the course of three pages, may, without the least trouble to the author, be spun out as far as the purse or the patience of the purchaser are likely to go; perhaps into five or six elegant quartos, "printed on a fine new type, handsomely bound in calf, and lettered on the back;" and what is yet more wonderful, "shining in all the brilliancy of PERFECTION ‡."

In the art of *eking out*, Dr Johnson is an admirable master. Unless you have perused some pages of *the English Dictionary* ||, you cannot have the least conception of his great and singular merit in that way. For this purpose, the folio edition is by far the best, as the long useless quotations which are perpetually staring in your face, cannot fail to provoke the most lively contempt.

In his lives of English Poets, there was far less room for a similar exertion of ingenuity. Yet, every thing considered, the Doctor has made the most of whatever opportunities he had for extending his subject. I proceed to proofs.

Waller's insipid harangue may fill about	6	8vo pages,
Extracts from metaphysical Poets	34	ditto
Account of J. Phillips, written by Smith	10	ditto
Ditto of Smith, written by Oldisworth	21	ditto
Criticism on Cato, by Dennis	22	ditto
From Pope's blotted manuscript of the Iliad §	12	ditto
Criticism of Dryden on Rhymer	18	ditto
Ditto by Ditto on <i>the Empress of Morocco</i> !	6	ditto
Answer by Settle	10	ditto
Blackmore against the Tale of a Tub	2	ditto
Innuendoes against Dr Young	6	ditto
Ditto from Prince Arthur	3	ditto
A letter from Granville	3	ditto
Milbourne's remarks on Dryden with his verses	8	ditto

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161 Considered

† The reader has no doubt heard of the famous quack Dr Graham. He lately printed eight octavo pages concerning his celestial bed; the price of this ponderous publication is said to be no less than a guinea. With what inexpressible contempt must this medical Pindarick merchant regard the understandings of his customers.

‡ Vide an advertisement of a late edition of the British poets.

|| There is only one book in the world which deserves that title.

§ A fragment of an epick poem in blank verse, and a sketch of its general plan, by Pope, are still preserved; would it not have been much better to have inserted them? The same writer has committed several errors in point of Geography. Mr Wood, in a voyage to the ruins of Troy, has observed and corrected them. His work would have furnished Dr Johnson with many entertaining materials; yet he is passed over without the least notice.

Considered merely as compositions, some of these extracts are infinitely despicable; all of them, where they now stand, serve at least one obvious purpose, they add considerably to the size of the book; "a circumstance (says Swift) by no means to be neglected by a skilful writer."

When a book is written, it must have a title page. In this department of authorship the Doctor acquits himself very happily. The title pages to his Dictionary and the Abridgement are very pompous. Curiosity must kindle at hearing "The lives of the most eminent English poets, with critical observations on their works." Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, are, by this account, none of "the most eminent English poets."—Poor Churchill is dismissed as a *shallow fellow*. Perhaps not fewer than fifty poets might be mustered up, all men of real merit, whose names are not even mentioned in this collection, where Duke, Yalden, Spratt, Blackmore, and many others who are admitted, had no great title to appear.

The "Critical Observations" are limited to a part of "their works." For instance, of Dr Swift's prose writings we have not even a catalogue. Of the same author's poems, all that he thinks proper to say is comprehended within less than a single page; for, to say more "would be to tell the reader what he knows already." Indeed our author seldom says any thing we know not already, unless when he shocks us with some of his odd whimsies; so that, by the same rule, his works, and above all his dictionary, ought to be committed to the flames. Of Milton's prose works we hear very little. Many other instances of the most unaccountable omissions might be given, but woe be to him who says all he can say.

Dr Johnson has, with great justice, observed, "That the English writers have studied elegance, and advanced their language, by successive improvements, to as much harmony as it can easily receive, and as much copiousness as human knowledge has hitherto required†. This appears to be one of his favourite ideas. He returns to it oftener than once; and, in the life of Dryden, has produced a very memorable passage on the same topick, to which particular attention is requested. "He (Dryden) had a vanity unworthy of his abilities;" he adopted several "French words, which had then crept into conversation; such as *fraicheur* for coolness, *fougue* for turbulence, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovators‡."

The Doctor's contempt and aversion to innovations in Philology, are here expressed in the clearest and most explicit terms, beyond the possibility of a quibble. Yet the world have long and loudly complained

† Idler, No. 63.

‡ If a writer, so much admired and imitated as Mr Dryden, has not been able to introduce *one* French word into our language, there seems to be very little danger of what Dr Johnson affirms, *viz.* "That the licence of translators, if it be suffered to proceed, will reduce us to babble" "a dialect of France." Preface to Folio Dictionary.

plained that he himself is the greatest innovator in point of stile, whom they have ever seen. In the Rambler, and the rest of his lesser works, he has revived many obscure and obsolete words, imported by the pedants of former ages, but never admitted into general use. This was pretty bold. But he goes yet farther. He has invented words which were never before heard of in the language. In the last number of the Rambler he assumes a degree of merit from his *additions* and *improvements*; and in the Idler, (No. 70) he observes, in defence of hard words, "That difference of thoughts will produce " difference of language. He that thinks with more extent than " another, will want words of larger meaning." From his Essays, Prefaces, Lives, Tour, Tale and Poems, a specimen of these words of "larger meaning," has been selected. *Shallow fellows* may possibly insinuate that they have no meaning at all. It is certain that very few of them are any where to be found in our purest authors.

Homogeneous	Rejuvenescence	Orbity
Ratiocination	Evanescence	Inanity
Resuscitation	Mellifluence	Mellifluous
Excogitation	IMPECCABILITY.	Dereliction
Elation	Sal	<i>Erratick Nations</i>
Frustration	Raciness	<i>Dilution of zeal</i>
Perambulation	Ramify	<i>Defecated</i>
Perflation	Repercussion	Indiscernible
Anhelation	Immane	<i>Volant animals</i>
Practice of <i>Cremation</i>	Perispicity	Scrupulosity
Ramification	Equiponderant	<i>Sidereal hemisphere</i>
Cognition	Otumbrated	<i>Congregated</i>
EXACERBATION	<i>Lacerated Friendship</i> †	Tenuity
Inebriation	Resiliency	Turbinated
Adaptation	Truncated	<i>A Veracious writer</i>
Reverberation	Detorted	<i>Apparent Elaboration</i>
Intumescence	Obtund	<i>The Suavity of verse</i> ‡.

Some of these words will no doubt find particular advocates, but I believe it cannot be denied, 1. That no man will understand them in English who has not acquainted himself with one or more of the antient or foreign languages. 2. That several of them are of the Doctor's invention, and have as yet been used by nobody but himself. 3. That very few of them are to be found in our purest authors. 4. That *none* of them have been *often* adopted by *any* author except the Doctor himself, and his professed imitators, (for such he has.) 5. That in the works of *no* single author, dead or living, except himself, can half the number now collected be found. 6. That where-
ever

† The reader knows that *lacerated*, and one or two other words are proper, but are not in their proper places here.

‡ Every body has laughed at Dr Johnson's definition of *net-work*; "any thing *reticulated* and *decurrated* at equal distances.—This, however, is not worse than a thousand others. Chemists and Students of Physick, will, in searching for their own professional terms, find uncommon entertainment.

ever they are applied, an author may express himself much better without them.

We know how delicate the Romans were in adopting foreign phrases, and with how much caution their most admired writers admitted even a single word without example. The case is the same in France, where an author of reputation could not, in the course of his whole life, bring into popular use (*profateur*) a word which the language, it is said, really wanted. Let us see how the best writers of the present age have acted in this respect. In the voluminous and elegant writings of Dr Robertson, the word *verisimilitude* has been objected to, and one or two others at most, and even these occur not perhaps above once, each of them, in all his works; yet no author is more celebrated for a beautiful and dignified perspicuity of style. In an *Enquiry into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations*, I am almost certain that the writer has not left a single foreign phrase unexplained, except the word *entrepôt*, which he adopts as an English noun. His style indeed is more remarkable for its clearness, vigour and precision, than for those flimsy refinements of false delicacy now so much in vogue. His comprehensive ideas are expressed with the utmost perspicuity, but he avoids all "*words of larger meaning*."

Simplicity presides in every page of Lord Hailes, Mr Hume, and Mr McPherson. Dr Smollet has indeed inserted in his novels many misplaced epithets, but then it is only to point out the folly of using or abusing them. Dr Beattie is weak enough to celebrate the merits of Dr Johnson's Dictionary, but he is at the same time wise enough to avoid altogether his pedantry of expression.

In "*memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*," we meet with *hauts-teurs*. The latest historian of Edinburgh, (no ordinary writer) has introduced *aemè*, a deserter from Dr Johnson's squadron. After a very humble apology for a very slight alteration, Lord Kaimes produces the adjective *diffocial**, and his timidity in doing so, forms a very striking contrast to Dr Johnson's singular presumption.

Dr Blair is allowed to possess a considerable degree of taste. He is said to have admitted into one of his sermons *impeccability*. Yet his language remains at an awful distance from the flogged style of Dr Johnson. In his lectures, that literary culprit has often been held out as a beacon. He does not, like the ingenious philosopher, *adore* "that great and good man." His immortal essay on Fingal laid the first, and perhaps, the firmest foundation of his fame. But if that work has any merit, it is to be lamented that Lexiphanes has no candour. Both critics cannot be in the right, when their opinions are opposite as paradise and perdition. In point of style, Dr Stuart is fonder of novelty than any of the Scottish writers now mentioned, and for this he has been vehemently censured. But his achievements in this way, compared with the pensioner's, are like a grain of sand in the balance against a mountain. Of the vocables se-

lected

lected above, *exacerbation* is perhaps the single instance where he borrows from Dr Johnson †. The choice of his words, the turn of his periods, and the tenor of his ideas, are sufficient evidence that he is not one of the Rambler's admirers. With what inexpressible contempt would this elegant illustrator of the feudal system pause in the midst of his researches, to hear, that a fir is "the tree of which deal-boards are made," and that Lord Oxford's old house-keeper told somebody, who told somebody, who told Dr Johnson, that Mr Pope was a very troublesome inmate, and paid handsomely for all such trouble.

Though the excellence of Dr Johnson's style is a favourite topick among his imitators, yet Dr Beattie has very fairly given up that point, by observing "That in fact the most elegant writers in every language are the most perspicuous" ‡. The gravest man in England will be apt to smile when he hears our author talk of the *flexure* of a turnpike road, and the *flaccidity* of a periwig.

As the world is led by celebrated names, and as *the Scots have of late learned to write English wonderfully well*, the greatest modern writers of North Britain have been selected, whose merits, when in a body, may possibly overbalance the example of Dr Johnson and his followers. Their reputation stands high. Some of them have revived the fading fame of their country. All of them have written our native language with spirit and accuracy, and not *one* of them has adopted the spawn of pedantry, which Dr Johnson has been at so much pains to spread in the literary world. It is *probable* that in all the compositions of all these elegant writers, there will not be found *six* of the words collected in the columns. This is a presumption, or rather a proof, that they do not approve them. It was thought needless to recapitulate the writers of Queen Anne's age, who never once dreamed of these improvements. Our great Roman historian never deforms his page with the *sal* of Julian, the *sapience* or *perspicacity* of Constantine, the *perambulations* of Adrian, or the *inanity* of Elagabalus. He labours to prove that Christianity was forced down the throats of mankind, but he does not deliver it as a *homogeneous* truth.

We have seen how roughly Dr Johnson handles Dryden for having introduced five or six French words. (The whole hardly exceed that number.) We have seen his attestation, that the language was abundantly copious without them. We have since seen his arguments in defence of such innovations; and we have seen about fifty words, (a small part only) of his own introduction or adoption. We have seen that *thirteen*, (and the number might have been greatly increased) of our best authors, pay no regard to his alterations. We may collect with how much propriety he can censure innovators, and then,

† This is meant only of his historical works. He is supposed to have written a great deal in periodical and mixed publications, of which notice cannot be distinctly taken.

‡ Dissertations moral and critical, p. 648.

then, in the midst of our astonishment at his impudence, and contempt for his inconsistency, we may peruse the following very candid criticism on the great and much envied author of *Paradise Lost*. "His diction is *so far removed from common use*, that an unlearned reader, when he first opens his book, finds himself surprised by a *new language*." (The doctor's readers are really in that situation) "Of him at last may be said what Johnson says of Spenser, that *he wrote no language*, but has formed what Butler calls a *Babylonish dialect*, in itself harsh and barbarous"†. Had Dennis dared to utter such a remark, he would have been immediately hissed out of every coffee-house he had ventured into. A pamphlet has been written in defence of Hammond, another in defence of Gray's Pindarick wonders; but though this criticism has been upwards of four years in the hands of the publick, there has not, I believe, a single word been said in defence of *Paradise Lost*! To what are we sinking, or have we any further to sink?

To shew the Doctor's peculiar antipathy to innovations in language, I shall quote one other passage on that subject from his letter to Lord Chesterfield. "The chief rule which I propose to follow is, to make no innovation, without a reason sufficient to balance the inconvenience of change, and such reasons *I do not expect often to find*. All change is of itself an evil, (No! No! No!) which ought not be hazarded, but for evident advantage, and as *inconstancy* is in every case a mark of weakness (*De hoc dubitatur*), it will add nothing to the reputation of our tongue." He proceeds to a most inimitable *ipse pinxit*. "There are indeed some who despise the inconveniencies of confusion, who seem to take pleasure in departing from custom, and to think alteration desirable for its own sake." The Doctor here speaks principally about spelling, but his abhorrence of all novelties in stile is very strongly expressed, yet, even in orthography, he has made many more alterations than any writer of the present age‡. Thus *authour*, *doctour*, *translatour*, *errour*, *persue*, *parcimony*, *unkle*, *gayety*, *peny* (for *penny*), and perhaps some other words are disfigured by his caprice. But as he generally spells them right, we may ask why he thus varies from himself, and how all this agrees with his violent protestations against inconstancy. His censures of Dryden, Shenstone, and Milton, apply more properly to himself than to any other mortal. His stile has many beauties, but had every writer taken equal liberties, our language must have been an unsettled, unintelligible, discordant jargon, and the chief design of this essay is to stem the torrent of his absurdities.

† Life of Milton. "Milton was skilful in many languages, and had, by reading and composition, attained the full mastery of his own," Johnson's Life of Milton. If you are unwilling to believe, that Milton was complete master of his language, and that at the same time, he knew nothing about it, give thirty shillings for the Doctor's book. His elegance will enchant, and his ingenuity will astonish.

‡ Excepting his friend and favourite, the translator of Martial. These great luminaries reflect a mutual light on each other. Yet Mr Elphinstone far eclipses our author. His alterations have little or no connection with Johnson's, and wander widely from every thing resembling the English language.

furdities. It is sometimes necessary to strip truth stark naked, to bid her assume a severer tone, and teach her to force conviction.

S E C T. IV.

WHEN a gentleman publickly submits to pocket the lie, he may quit good company as fast as he pleases, or they will immediately quit him. Esteem and friendship fly his presence, and with them every consolation of life. When an author is accused from a respectable quarter of direct and deliberate falsehood, and has neither evidence to attest his veracity, nor honesty to confess his guilt, we may admire the splendor of his abilities, but we must despise and pity the meanness of his heart.

The present age abounds with great authors, yet of these men, several, in spite of their supposed greatness, have condescended to *pocket the lie*. Their works have been criticised, and their deformities detected by philosophers, who, in candour, eloquence, and learning, were fully their equals; yet they continue to publish a series of imperfect editions. They dare not attempt to refute the reasonings of their antagonists. They will not do justice to the world by correcting their own. No writer is free from failings, but many seem to think themselves above truth.

In this zodiack of literature, Dr Johnson shines like a star of the first magnitude, and to prove this assertion, is one of the principal ends of the present essay. I am in this section to select a very remarkable passage from his celebrated tour.

“ I asked a very learned minister in the Isle of Sky, (who had used all arts to make me believe the genuineness of the book†) whether at last, he believed it himself. But he would not answer: He wished me to be deceived for the honour of his countrymen; but would not directly and formally deceive me. Yet has this man’s testimony been produced as of one who held Fingal to be the work of Ossian.”

Dr Johnson seems to think, that the Highland minister did not answer his question, only because he could not,‡ and that his silence amounted to a certain evidence of his guilt. Let us try the Doctor by his own rule. If he himself has refused to answer a very reasonable question, when proposed in such a manner as to affect his personal character, it is not easy to say what his best friends will urge in defence of his honour and veracity. Mr Topham, a gentleman of fortune, and the Doctor’s countryman visited North Britain not long after he had left it. In 1776 were published, Mr Topham’s “Lectures from Edinburgh.” The reader will attend to the following passage in that volume, and then say, whether the Doctor was not, by his own rule, bound to answer it. Having cited the above quotation

† The poems of Ossian.

‡ *Quere?* What answer would the Doctor himself have returned to such a brutal question.

tion from the Tour, he adds, p. 143, "Here is a plain simple tale, that I own staggered me: I have only to regret, for the Doctor's fake, that not one word of it is true. In some cases, it is unfortunately necessary to give the lie direct. In a conversation with the Laird of Macleod, who was present at the time, and whose word, I am bold to say, I can depend upon, I asked him whether this was the truth or not? His reply was this, *Quite the contrary, I assure you: Doctor Johnson was very overbearing, and laughed at the minister for giving credit to such an imposition; at last he asked him, Whether he seriously did believe it? The gentleman's answer was, That he did.* Now what degree of attention ought one to pay to a man who can misrepresent facts so grossly, and interpret them to his own purposes? A Scotchman, Dr Johnson says, *must be a very surdy moralist, who does not love Scotland better than truth:* But what country, or what attachment is it, that makes the Doctor himself regard truth so little." Here is indeed a very plain simple tale." The publication continues to circulate under Dr Johnson's eye, but no reply of any kind has yet been made. No comment is offered on these two contradictory passages. He who says too much, says too little, for whatever cannot enforce, enfeeble. The Doctor's silence anticipates every thing which can be said.

Juvenal has remarked, that to charge a man with ingratitude, is to suppose him capable of all other crimes. The reader will attend to what follows, and then determine, whether the Doctor is, or is not, the most grateful man now in existence. He says, "The civility and respect which we found at every place, it is *ungrateful* to omit, and tedious to repeat†." His behaviour when in Scotland is so well remembered there, and is so much of a piece with his behaviour when in his own country, that I shall only beg leave to make another short extract from the author whom I last quoted, p. 138. "He (Dr Johnson) was received with the most flattering marks of civility by every one; and his name had opened to him an acquaintance which his most sanguine wishes could scarce have hoped for; *but which his manners would certainly never have obtained.* He was indeed looked upon as a kind of miracle in this country; and almost carried about for a shew. Every one desired to have a peep at this phenomenon; and those who were so happy as to be in his company, were silent the moment he spoke, lest they should lose any of the good things he was going to say. It was expected that he should speak by inspiration. But the Doctor, who never said any thing that did not convey some gross reflection upon themselves, soon made them sick of jokes which were at their own expence. Indeed, from all the accounts I have been able to learn, he repaid all their attention to him with ill-breeding; and when in the company of the ablest men in this country, and
who

† Tour, page 373.

“ who are certainly *his* superiors in point of abilities, his whole design was to shew them how contemptibly he thought of them. But those, who make gods, and then fall down and worship them, should not be disappointed at the stupidity of their own idols. The Scotch, who looked upon Dr Johnson as something *supernatural*,” &c. That all this is true may be seen from the Doctor’s book. That the Scots are extremely hospitable to travellers, is attested by the most respectable authority. Sir Thomas Pennant has some where a passage, which is here quoted from memory. “ I have visited almost every part of Scotland. I have conversed with every class of men from the highest to the lowest, from his Grace down to his Grace’s footman. I have never once met with a single national reflection. Every Scotchman seems to feel a sense of his own dignity, which teaches him to avoid that conduct in himself, and to despise it in others.” He adds, “ *I am afraid they pity us.*”

Observe a second specimen of Dr Johnson’s veracity. He affirms in his Tour, p. 273, “ That the editor or author (of Ossian) never could shew the original, nor can it be shewn by any other; to revenge reasonable incredulity, by refusing evidence, is a degree of insolence with which the world is yet unacquainted; and stubborn audacity is the last refuge of guilt. It would be easy to shew it if he had it.” &c. This bold assertion came from “ the father of British literature, the greatest man of his age.” The literati of England were astonished. Many believed, and many more pretended to believe, that the whole affair was a cheat. The great author of the Rambler had said so, and who could presume to doubt it. This epidemick credulity was the very best evidence of their candour and good sense, which they could possibly give. But a few days put an end to the Doctor’s triumph. Mr Becket the bookseller was so extremely ill-bred as to print an advertisement, signifying, that the manuscript of Ossian had been left for a considerable time in his shop for the inspection of the curious. Mr M’Pherson had even sent out an advertisement offering to print his manuscripts. No subscribers appeared. No man in England could have read the Gaelic, except a few Scots Highlanders. You cannot suppose the greatest and most intelligent author alive to have been ignorant of all these circumstances. What then comes of his assertion, that *the original of Ossian could not be produced*?

He who takes two purses, will take a thousand, if he can get them, and he who tells two *fibs*, will not stick to tell a thousand. Of this maxim no ill-natured application is meant to be made. Dr Johnson’s moral character is pure and lovely, beyond example. “ None but himself can be his parallel.” And we have heard it so many hundreds of times in the Gentleman’s Magazine, that is to say, from the Doctor’s own authority, that nobody can think of doubting it. What a pity it is that he had not been a citizen of antient Rome.

A man of so much virtue must have ascended "the bright abodes;" and might been a very proper companion for some of their divinities.

S E C T. V.

"THE freaks, and humours, and spleen, and vanity of Women, as they embroil families in discord, and fill houses with disquiet, do more to obstruct the happiness of life *in a year*, than the ambition of the clergy *in many centuries* †." He who despises the weaker sex, is always despised by his own. The pride and ambition of priests and princes are by far the most abundant fountains both of national and domestic misery; and from female tenderness flows the sweetest consolation to sooth it. Divest him of the pleasures of love and friendship, and the master of mankind is poorer than his slave. No words can exaggerate the insipid tautology of the sentence now quoted.

Equally original and just is the observation, that, "A young man, whatever admiration and fondness may promise him, must marry a wife like the wives of others, with some virtues and some faults, and be as often *disgusted by her vices*, as delighted by her elegance ‡." The Spectator affirms, that bad wives are, by far less numerous than bad husbands. We are more frequently delighted by the elegance of women, than fretted by their foibles; nobody but an outcast from their society, will affect to despise it.

Dr Johnson, "with all his chillness of tranquillity," speaks of "the disposition ALWAYS shown to treat *old maids* as the refuse of the world ||." And this seems to be one of the Doctor's favourite sentiments §. But such a diabolical disposition can exist only in the bosom of a low-bred ungenerous ruffian, who sacrifices a friend for a jest. The late Earl of Chesterfield strictly cautions his son against this excess of vulgarity. "I have the good fortune (says Lord Kaimes) to be acquainted with three *maiden* ladies in high esteem, who have each of them undertaken the charge of a young orphan family. In all appearance they live as happily as any widow, and assuredly more so than many a married woman ††."

The Doctor attempts, with evident tremor and confusion, to injure the memory of the celebrated Mrs Johnson, because she was a woman, and the favourite of Swift. He takes care to remind us, that "Swift was a lover; his testimony may be suspected. Delany and the *Irish* saw with Swift's eyes, and therefore add *little* confirmation" ‡‡ That no degree of credit is due to Dr Delany will be admitted by those who peruse, through the spectacles of common sense, his verbose vindication of the murtherer of Joab and Uriah.

But

† Life of Pope.

‡ Rambler, N. 196.

|| Ibid, No. 39.

§ Vide Idler, Vol. I.—On a female army.

‡‡ Loose Hints on Education,

p. 226.

‡‡ Life of Swift.

But some respect is due to the attestation of the Earl of Orrery. One is at a loss how to reply to an author, who would rather, if he durst, deny veracity to the whole Irish nation, than condescend to allow the excellence of a single lady. The other sex will, no doubt, make a proper return for this piece of politeness." But she, "(Stella) had not " much literature, for she could not spell her own language." Of this charge, the Doctor hath, as usual, advanced no evidence, and therefore the presumption is, that his affirmation is ill founded. But even allowing the premisses to be true, the conclusions are not fair. Writers of reputation equal, and of merit infinitely superior to his own, *are not always able to spell*, and as he corresponds with men of learning, he must have seen from their letters, this curious and instructive circumstance. It has already been shewn, that Dr Johnson himself cannot always spell. Why then are we ever pestered with his frivolous innovations?

Stella's supremacy "was PERHAPS only local; she was great, because her associates were little." Here is a very fine compliment to the ladies of Ireland, which begins in a supposition, but rises, if I understand his language* into a positive and a most absurd assertion. From what we know of her character, we may presume that had Dr Johnson begun to *erudate* his *bon mots* in Stella's presence, her good sense would *perhaps* have taught him to blush.

Mrs Blount, the companion of Mr Pope, is treated with equal gallantry. "She is said to have neglected him (Mr Pope) with shameful unkindness, in the latter time of his decay." She COMPORTED "herself with such *indecent* arrogance, that she parted from Mrs Allen, "in a state of irreconcilable dislike, and the door was for ever barred against her †." Will a man of any delicacy condescend, at the distance of half a century to rip up the follies of a giddy girl? In this and a thousand other passages, Dr Johnson sinks into a most pitiful retailer of private scandal. It is painful to peruse, or to quote such impertinent trash, though we may be sure that he published it, as he says he did, *from an honest desire of giving* USEFUL PLEASURE ‡.

Dr Johnson speaks as if ignorance were inherent in the weaker sex. Camilla "had the ruggedness of a man without his force, and "the ignorance of woman without her softness§." But like the Rambler, many men are rugged without being forcible, and the ignorance of women which he speaks about with such emphasis is altogether imaginary. Poetesses perhaps excepted, there are very few women in England who do not far excel him in common sense and knowledge of the world. In the Rambler, he observes, that though Addison had

* The Doctor's mode of punctuation is carefully attended to in the course of these quotations.

† Life of Pope.

‡ Preface to Lives of English Poets,

§ Rambler, No. 115,

had spoke of the sex as ignorant and superficial, yet matters were much mended in the present age. But there is no wonder that a man should thus contradict himself when he talks about a subject, of which he knows almost nothing. He pretends, that "Love is the state which fills the heart with a degree of solicitude NEXT that of an author*." The father of this frigid remark seems never to have tasted "the bitter, yet sweet cup of sensibility." His female admirers will peruse the following passage with peculiar satisfaction.

"It may be particularly observed of WOMEN, that they are for the most part good or bad as they fall among those who practise vice or virtue, and that neither education nor reason gives them much security against the influence of example. Whether it be that they have less courage to stand against opposition, or that their desire of admiration makes them sacrifice their principles to the poor pleasure of worthless praise, it is CERTAIN whatever be the cause, that female goodness seldom keeps its ground against laughter, flattery, and fashion"†. This is only a *repercussion* of Pope's maxim, that *most women have no characters at all*‡. But these writers appear to have been acquainted with none of the sex, except some of those frivolous and unfeeling animals, *whose feet abide not in their own house*, and whose understandings, if they have any, are solely occupied by cards, china, coaches, comedians, hair-dressers, French dances, Italian fiddlers, cats, monkeys, and *lap-dogs*, these lovely melodious angels that so happily resemble their divine owners. Their literature extends to a few plays and novels. Their notions of symmetry are grossly absurd. They waste the fortunes which they could not have *earned*. They are incapable of sustaining the duties and the dignity of a parent. Their highest ambition is to command the notice of a few coxcombs, not worth the commanding. An admirer who visits the inmost recesses of fashionable elegance, will sometimes be tempted to sigh for the superior purity of the Greenland goddesses. Our own have been taught, that finery is better than cleanliness; that painting can supply the want of beauty; that the fragrance of nature is less grateful to the sense than the putrid stench of a perfumer's shop. They know not that simplicity is the soul of elegance, and MODESTY the foil to female charms. They feel not those tender and delightful emotions which sooth and reconcile us to the emptiness of life. They exist only to torment their husbands, their servants, their tradesmen, and themselves. They presume, that to be useless is to be great, to be seen is to be admired, to be thoughtless is to be happy. Luxury cor-

rupts

* Rambler. No. 1.

† Rambler, No. 70.

‡ The poet adds in the next verse, "That every woman is at heart a RAKE." If this be true, every woman must possess a fixed and a most pitiful character. The two complets *seem* to contradict each other, and yet, by a very singular infelicity both are equally false.

rupts them into the most *deplorable* weakness, and folly and servility bow to their dominion. But Dr Johnson had no title to reproach and reprobate the whole sex, on account of some worthless and ridiculous individuals; and though Solomon, out of a *thousand concubines*, found not *one* faithful, almost every man may, if he please, meet "with an admirable companion, an useful assistant, and an attached friend." It was the opinion of an author who did not read mankind through the medium of books only, who did not echo the sentiments of others, with indolent and servile stupidity, who wanted only Dr Johnson's opportunities of learning, to have rivalled Dr Johnson, *That* within the circle of his experience for half a century, the proportion of women to that of men thoroughly honest and disinterested, was at least as *five to one*. It were pedantick to recur to Rome or Sparta for proofs of female tenderness and heroism. Fifty-five women perished in the flames of popery during Mary of England's infernal reign. Victims of the same sex were destined to glut the pious revenge of Cardinal Beaton; whose fate has been so happily deplored by some tender-hearted historians †. "Thy love for me, (said the panegyrist of Jonathan) "Thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women;" and perhaps this is by far the sublimest panegyrick which poetry has ever bestowed on friendship. It was the courage and fidelity of his mistress, her superiority to the dread of danger and of death, which kindled the soul of the Celtick Homer, when with such fearless and imitable enthusiasm, he sung of "the battles of heroes, and the heaving breasts of love."

S E C T. VI.

WE return to Dr Johnson's celebrated tour. Through that work, every motion of his soul seems to center in malevolence. His narrative reunites almost every fault which can disgrace a literary composition.

"As to the universities of Scotland, the students for the most part go hither boys, and depart before they are men. They carry with them *little fundamental knowledge*, and therefore the superstructure *cannot be lofty*. They obtain a mediocrity of knowledge between learning and ignorance, not inadequate to the purposes of common life ‡."

That many students repair to the Scots universities, as to other places of the same kind while young, is true. Denina, an Italian author

† *Vid.* Deformities, &c. 2d edit. p. 45.

‡ Tour, p. —. Hear on this point no mean authority, that of a London bookseller. When asked, How he corrected his translators, "I get (said Lintot) any civil gentleman, especially any *Scotsman*, who comes into my shop to read the original to me in English." *Vid.* a Letter from Pope to Lord Burlington.

author of some reputation has remarked, " That the genius of the English nation is on the decline, and that of late years, the principal ornaments of British literature have appeared on the north of Tweed." This observation may serve to shew, that foreigners have a higher opinion of the Scots than the Doctor seems to have. In Oxford, " the greater part of the publick professors have, for these many years, given up altogether, even the pretence of teaching †." Mr Gray ‡ compares Cambridge to a den of *wild asses*. " The wild beasts of the desert shall dwell there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and the owls shall build there, and satyrs shall dance there. It shall be a court of dragons," &c. So much for *English universities*, and fifty years have since elapsed without even a hope of reformation.

In page 41. of the same book, the RAMBLER, says, that he had now marched " two hundred miles in Scotland, without having seen " a tree older than himself;" which was owing to the nearness of his vision. By the time he reaches the 65th page, when it is very fair to compute that he had wandered three hundred miles, he says, " this was the *first* highland hut we had ever seen." He goes on to describe it; and then, page 67, he adds, " Such is the *general* " structure of the houses in which *one* of the nations of this powerful and opulent island has been hitherto content to live." Which of these nations can the Doctor mean? It is not the English. It cannot be the Scots. For, by his own account, he had advanced some hundreds of miles into their narrow country, before he had seen the *first* hut.

" We read with as little emotion the violence of Knox and his followers, as the irruptions of Alarick and the Goths ††." And this noble sentiment is not a mere *lapsus mentis*, for the Rambler had told us thirty years ago, that " Histories of the downfall of " kingdoms and revolutions of empires are read with *great tranquillity* ††." Who but the greatest blockhead alive can bear without a sigh of the destruction of art, wealth, beauty and magnificence. When Roman patriotism had razed the walls of Carthage, who but a monster can read " with *great tranquillity*," how every tie of justice and humanity was violated; and violated too by that military blood-hound, whom ten thousand ingenious pedants have intitled the *virtuous* Scipio. When he reflects how Hannibal and Sophonisba were compelled to drink the cup of poison, Dr Johnson himself will

† Inquiry into the wealth of nations, b. I. chap. 1. part 3. art. 2.

‡ In a letter to Mr West, dated in 1736.

†† Tour, page 15.

†† Rambler, No 60.

will not be ashamed to shed a tear *. The man who has a heart must feel it rise, when, in the simple, but emphatic language of a soldier, "Aratus, the son of Clinias, calls his fellow citizens to liberty †."

"What stores of imagery, what principles of *rationation*, what comprehension of knowledge, and what delicacy of elocution have we known any man attain who cannot read ‡." Pizarro, a legislator as well as a conqueror, could not read his own name. Charlemagne could not write his, and we may believe that he read but little. Whether they had any principles of *rationation*, I cannot say, being unacquainted with the meaning of that melodious polysyllable; but their knowledge and sagacity will not be disputed. You will recollect a thousand instances of the same kind. We have no certainty that the divine author of the Iliad ever saw an alphabet. The blind, we are sure, have never seen one, though, in taste and genius, they are often equal to the Rambler. The savages of North America are eloquent and acute; and here, as in many of his mistakes, we have the whole weight of Dr Johnson's own authority to contradict him. For he has given us the oration of an Indian, full of "comprehensive knowledge and delicate elocution §." It contains, indeed, many abstract terms of which an Iroquois could have no conception; and this circumstance shews the Doctor's unacquaintance with human manners, or rather his contempt of propriety. But, from the first line of this harangue to the last, there flows throughout a vein of nervous and sublime eloquence. And the author has not hinted that this copper-coloured patriot had been taught to read. This absurd opinion, as well as another to be detected immediately, arises from Dr Johnson's narrow views of human nature. He seems to forget for a moment that mankind ever existed under any mode of manners except his own.

"Few have opportunities of hearing a long composition often enough to learn it, or have inclination to repeat it *so* often as is necessary

* It is very extraordinary that the authors of the Universal History have applauded Masinissa for murdering his beautiful, innocent and defenceless Queen: Their words are these, "His heart was rent with opposite passions, but at length his VIRTUE and his INTEREST got the better of his love." A book which contains such principles of morality, ought to be burnt by the hands of the hangman.

† Vide Plutarch.

‡ Tour, p. 269.

§ Idler, No. 81. This speech proceeds upon principles of speculative generosity, rather than of real justice. The laws of nature and the right derived from prior possession, could never entitle a single American hunter to keep waste as much land as, in a different system of life, would be sufficient to support five hundred families. Yet on this very subject, numerous and beautiful declamations have been penned, by men who write what they do not feel, and who call themselves *philosophers*, an appellation once honourable, but which a succession of dunces may teach us to despise.

" necessary to retain it *." The traveller had told us before, that he arrived in the north of Scotland too late to see ancient manners, and (such was the laxity of highland conversation!) that the more he heard, the less he knew. Yet he proceeds to fill pages upon a topick of which he had previously declared that he could learn NOTHING. When this ingenious gentleman peruses Tacitus, he will be taught, that the Germans had opportunities to hear, and inclination to repeat the poems of their ancestors. The Chileses, it is said, have the same custom at this day. Had Homer ever heard of letters, we may believe that he would some where have hinted it. And his silence on that head is a strong presumption of what has been frequently told, that he sung his works like ballads through Greece. A man of common memory might get by heart the whole Iliad in less than a year; and we are certain, that a people of such refined sensibility as the Greeks, would not neglect so great an acquisition. When we reflect upon the peculiar situation and character of their clans, and how the human faculties extend in exertion †, it is injudicious to say that a Scots highlander could not retain on memory all the Gaelick poetry that we have yet seen. Latin grammar, so *seldom* illustrated by an execration or a kick ‡, is acquired with ease before the age of twelve or fourteen. And it would be far less difficult to get by heart ten thousand verses. Many have disbelieved the authenticity of Fingal, because they could not conceive that any memory was capable to retain it. But the well known fact now mentioned overturns that opinion.

At St Andrews, Mr Boswell found only one tree. " I told him," (says the Doctor) " that it was rough and low, or looked as if I thought so §." Dr Johnson observes, that an author " cannot be justly offended at that liberty of which he has himself so frequently given an example, nor very solicitous what is thought of" a book " which I suppose since the ardour of composition is remitted, he no longer numbers among his happy effusions †." All the world have agreed that the Doctor's tour was an unfortunate effusion, but the infelicity of this last remark is less generally known. The tree which he speaks of as *rough* and *low*, is yet standing in Col. Nisbet's garden. It is forty feet high, and a plant of uncommon bulk and beauty.

Dr

* Tour, page 273.

† It has been remarked, that in Edinburgh, School-boys are sometimes treated with very little humanity. *Vide* Loose hints on Education, page 128. And were the particulars collected, they would fill a very shameful and a very shocking volume. Parents are vain of the poor splendors of an examination day, but they suspect not what their children may suffer from the caprice of a petty tyrant. A prudent writer will not exert his abilities on a subject of so much real use to mankind. Infatuated delicacy leads us to hazard the lives of our children, that we may save the reputations of one or two wretched pedants, who have not, after all, any reputations to lose.—N.B.W.E despise the Hottentots!

‡ Tour, p. 16.

§ Preface to Shakspeare.

Dr Johnson is at a loss to find out whether a beggar ought to be modest or clamorous. Whether a window can be properly supported by a nail.—Whether a pair of brogues can be stitched without an apprenticeship to the trade; and whether, when stitched, they are worth three halfpence, or half a crown. Whether a bull can be found which wants horns. Whether a nation can exist without kail. Whether a greasy, scrophulous, overgrown Englishman, can endure the smell of Cheshire cheese, and where the highlanders got it. Whether a man can leave himself behind himself. Whether the soul of a presbyterian can be saved. Whether every Scots man and woman, who entertained him *gratis*, was not a liar; and whether any highland lass was *in love* with him †.

In the Idler, No. 97. Dr Johnson has drawn a very humorous and fantastic picture of the ordinary stile in which a traveller writes his book. From the just ideas which he advanced on that point, we were led to lament that he had never visited the rest of Europe. But the publication of his tour, put a period to every regret of that kind. He appears to be one of “those wanderers who pass a desert, and tell that “it is sandy, who cross a valley, and find that it is green”, and he who reads his performance, must consider his labour “as its own reward; for he will find nothing,” (or at least but little) “on which “attention can fix, or which memory can retain †.”

Dr Johnson treats the poems ascribed to Ossian with infinite contempt, though every man of feeling *must* admire their beauties, and every man who examines the question *must* allow their authenticity. But though this great ornament of the English nation, and of the eighteenth century, is so extremely sceptical on a subject, of which no person seriously doubts, yet he has extended through several octavo pages a defence of the reality of the *second sight*. He rejects the most evident truths. He swallows the most ridiculous superstitions. He is certainly “the deepest philosopher, the wittiest writer, and the “greatest man who ever adorned this age or nation.” He deserves all the fine things which have been said of him in the Gentleman's

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Magazine,

† “I should not be pleased to think that *she* forgets me.” Tour, p. 78.

‡ Idler, No. 97. As Dr Johnson is a bitter enemy to “the gloom of Calvinism,” it is surprising that he forgot to give a stroke at that execrable remnant of Popish superstition, and Presbyterian tyranny, the *School of Repentance*. In many counties of Scotland, when a young girl has been ruined by some rascal whom she loved and trusted, the beadles drag her on to public infamy, and even at this day the unhappy woman is often compelled to eradicate the last particle of her modesty, that she may gratify the libidinous and brutal curiosity of a “rampant “priesthood,” and inform them not only with *whom*, but *when*, and *where*, and *why*, and *how*, and *how often*, the horrid and unnatural crime was committed. Did they learn this conduct from that of our Saviour to the Jewish adulteress? And whether ought we to respect *him* for *their* sakes, or *them* for *his*? The wretch who can put such questions to a girl, was never intended by nature to be the minister of religion: He is fit only for the bully of a brothel.

Magazine, and in twenty other periodical publications. For these pamphlets are every one of them the productions of men of honour and veracity, men who are never under the influence of the booksellers who support them. They never fabricate a story to flatter the prejudices of the public, or to gratify their own. They write for fame, and for posterity. As for the doctrine of the second sight, which our author is *inclined to believe*, the predictions of any man may, by mere chance, be right at least once in ten times, but the gift of prophecy can be acquired only by a miraculous power; and why should the Supreme Being condescend to work a succession of miracles in the brain of a highland cow-herd? The rapid and alarming progress of reason has rendered the present age very unwilling to credit the marvellous. "I have too much respect (says a French writer) for the character of the Deity, to believe in so many miracles which do him so little honour."

"Knolles, in his history of the Turks, has displayed all the excellencies that orations can admit. His style, though somewhat obscured by time, and sometimes vitiated by false wit, is pure, nervous, elevated, and clear. A wonderful multiplicity of events is so artfully arranged, and so distinctly explained, that each facilitates the knowledge of the next. Whenever a new personage is introduced, the reader is prepared by his character for his actions; when a nation is first attacked, or a city besieged, he is made acquainted with its history or situation; so that a great part of the world is brought into view. The descriptions of this author are without minuteness, and the digressions without ostentation. Collateral events are so artfully woven into the texture of his principal story, that they cannot be disjoined without leaving it *lacerated* and broken. There is nothing turgid in his dignity, nor superfluous in his copiousness. His orations only, which he feigns, like the ancient historians, to have been pronounced on remarkable occasions, are tedious and languid; and since they are merely the voluntary sports of imagination, prove how much the most judicious and skilful may be mistaken in the estimate of their own powers."

"Nothing could have sunk this author in obscurity, but the remoteness and barbarity of the people whose story he relates. The nation which produced this great historian, has the grief of seeing his genius employed upon a foreign and uninteresting subject.—He has exposed himself to the danger of oblivion, by recounting enterprizes and revolutions of which none desire to be informed †."

The English nation can hardly be said to "grieve" about Knolles, because not one individual in a thousand knows that ever he existed, and because the chance is that no person in the present century has ever waded through half his book. The Doctor says, That Knolles has undertaken to relate wars and revolutions of which no one desires to be informed; but he must have little intelligent curiosity who does

not

† Rambler, No. 122.

not wish to contemplate the police of a people so singular, and the progress of an empire so powerful. The Turkish history possesses peculiar importance and magnificence, from the strongly marked characters of the conquerors, and from the terrible revolutions which have attended their arms. All Europe at this day continues, to feel the consequences of these great events; and will any man in his senses pretend that such a subject deserves not the notice of a philosopher? It is ridiculous to alledge the remoteness and barbarity of the Ottomans, as a cause of the neglect of their history. In the age of Knolles, the rest of Europe were hardly less ignorant and barbarous than the Turks, and in many respects were far behind them. To talk of their remoteness, is, if possible, yet more absurd. That people can scarcely be termed remote, who were so lately besieging the capital of the German empire, who possess so great a part of the finest regions in Europe, and who have so long carried on an extensive commerce with the rest of the world, and, during many years, in particular, with England.

It was not then the bad choice of a subject, which sunk the Doctor's favourite into oblivion; for had Knolles possessed that capacity of instructing, and that art of interesting his readers, so conspicuous in the pages of Robertson and of Stuart; or had his eloquence been in any degree equal to the dignity of history, his work would have been perused with uncommon pleasure. But other causes may be found for the universal neglect of Knolles. Mr Hume, in his catalogue of the eminent writers of that age, has not condescended even to *name* this writer. Indeed the clumsiness of his style would make him ridiculous to the meanest peasant. His ponderous folio contains near fourteen hundred pages, and is dedicated to "the High and Mighty Prince James, his Gracious and Dread Sovereign." His Majesty was, it seems, a maker of verses, for we hear of "your learned muse," and "your Lepanto or heroical song." In the same page he celebrates that amiable personage who butchered his Majesty's mother, as "the rare Phenix of her sex, who now resteth in glorie." And this delicate panegyrick is almost as long as Cæsar's account of a campaign.—Who would have suspected that the Rambler was to lavish his long tailed epithets on such a mass of deformity? But his panegyricks are often as ill timed as his censures. The rudeness of that age cannot apologize for the total want of elegance in Knolles, though, were it to vindicate him, it cannot vindicate the Doctor†. But Lexiphanes ought likewise to have known, that this age produced a historian who, in grace, dignity, and conciseness, is no less superior to Knolles than M'Pherson is superior to Burnet; a historian who,

† Compare the style of the Turkish history with that of North's Plutarch, and you will find that the former is by far the worst of the two.

who, in fluency and sweetness of stile, in perspicuity of ideas, and happiness in arranging them, is not far excelled by the purest living author.* There are a few, and but a few obsolete words to be met with in this writer, and we do not wish to alter them, as they give his work a venerable air of antiquity. I allude to David Hume's lives of the house of Douglas, "a house, in which, by a singularity unparalleled in history, ten heroes succeeded each other." Buchanan preceded both these authors, and whatever were his faults, he disgraced not his book by a fulsome dedication to his pupil.

What can Dr Johnson mean, when he says that "the Critick is the only man whose triumph is without another's pain, and whose greatness does not rise upon another's ruin †." No position was ever more evidently false.

In an essay on the loss of ancient writings, the Doctor says, "That had they been preserved, almost every subject would have been preoccupied‡." Are the labours of Hume and Smollet anticipated by Livy and Lucian? Has Horace deprived Pope of a subject for the exertion of his genius? Has the preservation of the Iliad blasted the laurels of Milton; or, has he not every where studied and imitated his great master? Is it likely, is it possible, that a painter should have his hand spoiled, by surveying the monuments of Italian art? Yet this is exactly what Dr Johnson means to say. Cibber and Foote could have borrowed little from the comedies of Menander; but their works would certainly have been the better for that little. Had an Athenian philosopher anticipated Locke's essay, its author would have exerted his abilities on a subject more useful to mankind than metaphysics. The paper concludes with a strain of impertinence too frequent in our author. We are reminded of one evident and immense advantage, that arises from the destruction of so great a portion of Plutarch and Polybius. "It is apparent, that if the old writers had all remained, the Idler could not have written a disquisition on the loss."

S E C T. VII.

"**P**OPE's private correspondence, thus promulgated, filled the nation with praises of his candour, tenderness, and benevolence; the purity of his purposes, and the fidelity of his friendship." This was, it is said, the reception the letters met with when printed by Curll; but when Pope himself had vindicated his property, by a genuine edition, "they awakened no popular kindness, or resentment. The book never became much the subject of conversation. Those who read it, did not talk of it: not much therefore was added by it to fame or en-

vy,

† Idler, No 62.

‡ Ibid. No. 66.

“vy: nor do I rememaber that it produced either praise or censure.” Yet, in the preceding page, we are told, that these letters *filled the nation* with the praises of Pope! These accounts cannot both be true. Which of them are we to believe? and what credit is due to an author who contradicts himself, at least a thousand times? When speaking of one of his superiors, Dr Johnson remarks, “That he always understands himself, and his reader always understands him.” We cannot return this compliment to the RAMBLER.

Pope incited a prosecution against Curll, in the House of Lords, for having, in a clandestine manner, published his letters. The narrative proceeds thus: “Curll’s account was, that one evening a man in a clergyman’s gown, but with a lawyer’s band, brought and offered to sale a number of printed volumes, which he found to be Pope’s epistolary correspondence; that he asked no name, and was told none, but gave the price demanded, and thought himself authorised to use his purchase to his own advantage.

“That Curll gave a true account of the transaction, it is reasonable to believe, because no falsehood was ever detected; and when some years afterwards I mentioned it to Lintot, the son of Bernard, he declared his opinion to be, that Pope knew better than any body else how Curll obtained the copies, because another parcel was at the same time sent to himself, for which no price had ever been demanded, as he made known his resolution not to pay a porter, and consequently not to deal with a nameless agent.

“Such care had been taken to make them publick, that they were sent at once to two booksellers, to Curll, who was likely to seize them as a prey, and to Lintot, who might be expected to give Pope information of the seeming injury. Lintot, I believe, did nothing, and Curll did what was expected. That to make them publick was the only purpose may be reasonably supposed, because the numbers offered to sale by the private messengers shewed that hope of gain could not have been the motive of the impression.

“It seems that Pope, being desirous of printing his letters, and not knowing how to do, without imputation of vanity, what has in this country been done very rarely, contrived an appearance of compulsion; that when he could complain that his letters were surreptitiously published, he might decently and defensively publish them himself.”

No rational temptation could impel Mr Pope to so foolish a project. The story hangs very ill together. It is absurd to believe Curll, “because no falsehood was ever detected.” His name was dedicated to infamy. The second evidence is the Doctor himself; but we have already seen him convicted of a thousand most scandalous untruths. If “Lintot, the son of Bernard,” ever told him the tale which he repeats, let it be remembered, that Pope and Bernard were on the worst terms. The last evidence is “James Worfsdale, a painter, *but whose*
“ *veracity*

"*veracity was very doubtful.*" He "declared, that *he* was the messenger who carried, by Pope's direction, the books to Curll." On this strange authority, the Doctor attempts to stab the reputation of his deceased friend; and such are the precious morsels of private history, which this candid author deals out with so much ostentation. He observes in another place, that "if accusation, *without proof*, be "credited, who shall be innocent?" The whole accusation against Pope rests on the veracity of Messrs Curll, Worrdale, and Johnson, (three names how happily joined!)—It is therefore supported by no evidence. It is contradicted by the strongest presumptive evidence, *viz.* the personal character of Pope, *Nemo repente fit turpissimus*; besides the circumstances of the story are in themselves to the last degree incredible and absurd.

"Pope has formed his theory (of the ruling passion) with so little skill, that, in the examples by which he illustrates and confirms it, he has confounded passions, appetites, and habits. Perhaps it is so, but Dr Johnson has not offered to prove this. Indeed the task was far beyond *his* reach. His excellence lies in declamation: He is far from being one of the soundest reasoners in the world.

Of Pope's imitations of Horace we learn, for the first time, "that such imitations cannot give pleasure to common readers." Such a criticism requires no answer. Its author is "a man whose learning is not very great, and whose mind is not very powerful."

"The religion in which he (Pope) lived and died, was that of the Church of Rome, to which, in his correspondence with Racine, he professes himself a *sincere* adherent. It does not appear that his principles were ever corrupted, or that he ever lost his belief of "revelation." And the Doctor has been at more than common pains to prove, that though the Essay on Man has an *irreligious* tendency, yet Pope received its leading principles from Bolingbroke, *without understanding them*†!

But, in the *first* place, it is not clear that the Essay on Man is *irreligious*. Dr Johnson has the whole merit of *that* discovery, and the grateful reader must admire his penetration. In the *second* place, if "the constituent and fundamental principle of Pope's intellectual character was good sense‡," the Doctor is rather inconsistent, when he says, that Mr Pope transmitted positions, "which he seems not to have understood." It is equally inconsistent with Pope's good sense

† Dr Johnson, has exerted the utmost force of his abilities, to prove that St John concealed his atrocious opinions from Pope; yet in a memoir of Bolingbroke, written by Goldsmith, we are told, that his Lordship had always propagated his sentiments on Moses in publick conversation. How then could Pope be ignorant of what was known to every body else? A letter from Dr Arbuthnot to Dr Swift, has come down to us, wherein he says, that he had been disputing with Lord B. on the subject of religion, and that *he was determined to give these ignorant fellows battle upon all occasions.* All this evinces Dr Johnson's profound ignorance of his subject.

‡ Life of Pope.

sense to suppose, that he was "a sincere adherent" to the Church of Rome. But the fact is, that Pope did not believe a single word of Revelation. Chesterfield assures us, that "he was perfectly intimate with Pope, and often staid a week or ten days together with him at Twickenham: That Pope, as he often confessed to him, was a deist, believing in a future state: That he came in upon him one morning, when Pope had a large old bible lying before him: That as he knew his opinion of *that* book, he asked him, if he was going to write an answer to it: That Pope told him, that he had received it that morning as a present from the Bishop of Rochester, who was then in the Tower, and who had recommended it to his attentive perusal†."

This account is much more feasible, than that the companion and the friend of Swift could swallow the absurdities of popery, which, in every point of view, bid such a defiance to common sense. Mr Pope had neither strength nor courage to repel the storms of ignorant superstition, and impertinent piety. On a subject where he could not hope to gain his audience, he, with great wisdom, held his tongue.

"Atterbury had honestly recommended to him (Pope) the study of the popish controversy, in hope of his conversion." How little Atterbury would interest himself in the conversion of Pope, we may learn from Lord Chesterfield. In the passage last quoted, his Lordship informs us that the divine and the poet had the same opinions of religion, a fact indeed very curious! and his authority may be preferred to that of Dr Johnson, because, though his memory has been attacked by an army of invidious, and perhaps despicable enemies, yet, he has never, like our great literary delinquent, been convicted of *pocketing the lie*.

Dr Johnson has remarked that Chesterfield's letters inculcate "the morals of a w—e, and the manners of a dancing-master." They contain a profusion of fine writing, and are admired by most of those who pretend to despise them. A few lines have been the source of infinite reproach; for he who could give no better evidence of his chastity, could rail at Chesterfield. The most offensive passages will not fill an ordinary page. They were not, like Dr Johnson's volumes of malevolence and slander, composed for the perusal of the publick. And without apologizing for a crime, which is countenanced in many countries, and practised in all, we may safely affirm, that in France marriage is often but a very slender connection. Consult St Preux, and Dr Alexander's book as to this point. The noble author cannot
be

† This quotation is not like the rest literal; for when this sheet went to the press, I had mislaid Chesterfield's characters. This however is a circumstance of no moment; for it is hoped the reader will find that the story is repeated with sufficient exactness. The authenticity of the book referred to has never been disputed, and its elegance and spirit are the purest evidences of its origin. Dr Johnson, from the vilest of all motives, would wish to slight the writings of his Lordship. The publick comprehend his feelings.

be vindicated; but what must be the feelings of that woman, who sacrificed the reputation of a father and of a husband, merely for the pleasure of propagating vice!

His Lordship's taste in literature has been denied by many, who, at the same time, produce but very poor specimens of their own. It has been alledged that he preferred Ovid to Virgil, and the proof is, that he sometimes quoted the former, and more than once mentioned the fundamental deficiencies in the fable of the latter. He detested the ferocity of Homer's heroes, and for that reason, it is said, he could not feel the beauties of true pathos and sublimity. With a boldness, which pedants cannot, and which professed authors, for the most part, *dare not* imitate; he, like Lyttleton, pointed out some of the absurdities of *Paradise Lost*, and this is a crime which cannot be forgiven, *even by Dr Johnson and his defenders*. He admired Voltaire, the most various and popular writer of the present age, and consequently he cannot have had the soul of an Englishman. He valued politeness; hated pedants, and hard words; laughed at the *divine* right of popes and kings; (*Vide Letter 244.*) and had shown some particular civilities to our illustrious pensioner. We need not then wonder, that Dr Johnson was so ready to sound the trumpet of defamation. This has been his favourite amusement for half a century; and he no doubt considered that a living dog is better than a dead lion. His Lordship's historical portraits are not faultless; for they were written by a man, but they are worthy of the pen of Sallust. His essays in the *World*, &c. would have added lustre to the name of Fielding. His style is elegance itself. His admonitions deserve to be studied by all. In spite of his fondness for the French philosophers, the cloven foot of infidelity can no where be traced in his writings; and divines at least ought to shew their gratitude for his respect to decency. He harangues with the most pious and devout fervour against the fashionable vices, such as swearing, lying, drinking, gaming, and wenching. He assures his son that he will not pay for w——s, and their never failing consequences, surgeons; and that, in spite of all his art, the world will find out his real character, and that a liar and a knave are inevitably detected, detested, and despised. These precepts recur in almost every page; and yet some people tell us, that the *Letters* are a very dangerous book, and they cite the candid and polite sentence of Dr Johnson, that veteran advocate of veracity and virtue †.

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† I hope the reader will forgive this digression. His Lordship, when alive, was courted by the whole herd of book-builders. When dead, we hardly see a single pen drawn to defend his memory. Nobody understood better than he did how very little authors are superior to the rest of mankind. In one of these letters, (No. 230.) he says, "I must do the French people of learning justice. They are not bears, as most of *ours* are. *They* are gentlemen." In another place, (No. 259.) He observes that "Monsieur de Maupertuis is what one rarely meets with, deep in philosophy and mathematicks, and yet *bonnete et aimable*"

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To return to our subject, Mr Pope's verses on an unfortunate young lady have been long admired. It was hazardous for Dr Johnson to damn them abruptly, because some, even of *his* admirers, might have been presumptuous enough to think for themselves, and, of consequence, to dissent from their dictator. As he durst not absolutely condemn the poetry, he throws the most invidious and venomous reflections on the character of the lady. Accept a sample of his observations. "Poetry has not been often worse employed than in dignifying the amorous FURY of a raving girl. It does not appear that she had any claim to *praise*, nor † much to *compassion*." She was driven from her country by the severity of her pretended friends ‡. She was shut up in close confinement. She was reduced by despair to suicide. She was denied a decent burial. And the man who can read her story *without much compassion*, "may, if he pleases, comfort himself on being completely armed against sympathetick sorrow."

On this subject, it appears that Dr Johnson was as destitute of information, as void of humanity. He says that he "can tell no more than he has learned from Ruffhead," who gives no authority for his narrative. We have since been informed from a publication most improperly termed the *Gentleman's Magazine*, that Ruffhead had only borrowed the tale from Ayre's life of Pope. Dr Johnson seems not to have heard of Ayre's book. Ayre gives no evidence for the truth of the story; and thus the fabrick of slander which the Doctor had erected on what he says, "History relates," when traced to its original, vanishes into smoke. His want of attention often leads him to neglect the most obvious and important truths. His want of good nature leads him to credit the most despicable hearsays.

When we see, with how little justice or decency, Dr Johnson has handled some of the most respectable names, it is a little curious to meet with the following remark, "Respect is due to *high* place, tenderness to *living* reputation, and veneration to genius and learning||." And why not tenderness to the reputation of the dead? Why, for the best reason in the world! He has told us somewhere else, that "the dead cannot pay for praise." If respect be due to high place, no man ever shewed less for it than the pensioner. His soul is turbulence itself. If Warburton had been a curate only, or, like the founder of Philadelphia, had he perished in a jail, we may from his own words infer, that Dr Johnson would have insulted his labours with every possible epithet of irreverence

G

How

"*homme*." However his Lordship, in Letter 96. adopts these words, "For my own part, I used to think myself in company as much above me, when I was with Mr Addison and Mr Pope, as if I had been with all the princes of Europe."

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|| Preface to Shakespeare.

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¶ Preface to Shakespeare.

How much respect Dr Johnson pays to *high place*, the reader will judge from the following well known anecdote. When at the house of a gentleman in Scotland, to whom he owed many obligations, he was remarking with great freedom, that "G---e the First was a fool, "G---e the Second was a fool," and "pray," replied his entertainer, "what may be your opinion of G---e the Third, who gave you the pension?" The same gentleman having, at his own table, told a story, asked the Doctor's opinion of it;—"My opinion is, that ten minutes are too long a time to sit hearing any man talk nonsense." The gentleman had a son present, who is a particular admirer of Dr Johnson; "Jimmy," says the father, when the company had broke up, "where, in the name of wonder, did you find this great Russian Bear. He is the filthiest, and, at the same time, the worst bred animal I ever saw." In the *first* edition of *Deformities*, it was hinted, that when Lexiphanes was in Scotland, the grossness of his conversation shocked every body who came near him. The Critical Reviewers imagined, that the publication would not be well received in England. They were forward, as they often are, to pay their court to the prejudices of the public, but they could find only *one* paragraph which was unsupported by irresistible evidence, and that was respecting the Doctor's demeanour when in Scotland. As this assertion could not be proved by a quotation from the Doctor's works, they attacked the author in the severest terms, and their invectives were, it is said, transcribed into that candid and respectable performance the *Town and Country Magazine*, where you may find, every month, under the title of *Tete a Tetes*, a succession of insipid, impudent and malicious lies. As these Reviewers had celebrated our author's great candour, the reader is directed, in the second edition of *Deformities*, where to find a passage in which the Doctor declares, without ceremony, that the Critical and Monthly Reviewers are a *set of hungry, mercenary, servile SAVAGES!* If it shall still be insisted, that I aver what I have not proved, I answer, that for many averments regular proof is never required. Common report is sufficient. An hundred pitiful anecdotes, in Dr Johnson's account of English poets, are supported by no better testimony than his own; and he tells us, that he remembers to have heard them from *somebody* who died fifty years ago; but these *somebodies* have never, as far as the world know, told them to any body else. Upon *such* authorities he deals away the reputations of Pope, Swift and Addison. And, in the Critical Review, it is most falsely and impudently said, that their lives have been written by our author with peculiar happiness.

When the RAMBLER was at Edinburgh, he was asked what he saw, which pleased him most? "I see nothing worth looking at" (says he) but—the road to England." He went to visit a gentleman, who happened to say "that he had a complaint in his eyes."

"Good

" Good heaven ! " says our author, " what do I hear, a professor of RHETORICK who tells me, that he has a complaint in his eyes. I suppose, SIR, you meant to say, that you have a disease in your eyes, of which you complain ! "

Speaking of the loss of antient authors, he says, that " perhaps if we could now retrieve them, we *shall* (for *should*) find them only the Granvilles, Montagues, Stepneys, and Sheffield's of their times, and wonder by what infatuation or caprice they could be raised to notice. † " The next age will most certainly wonder, what it was that raised his English Dictionary into notice. But " some are born great, some achieve greatness, and *some* have greatness THRUST upon them. " The passage now quoted is too despicable to deserve any answer. Its author is truly an original character. He dislikes, or rather detests the English nobility, the English dissenters, and the Scottish nation. He has written at least an hundred pages, perhaps thrice that number, full of invective and calumny against the characters and productions of English poets. He has long since publicly proposed to EXTERMINATE the rebels of North America ‡. At the time of the famous Middlesex election, every body remembers how he insulted those electors, who voted for Mr Wilkes, and the sixty thousand English freeholders who took their part §. Mr Wilkes, indeed, escapes his pen, " for, (says the Doctor) lampoon itself " would disdain to speak ill of him, of whom no man speaks well. " This is not very temperate language; so that to say that this book is only the production of an " angry Scot, " is a very insignificant observation. He has railed a thousand times more at the English than ever he did at their neighbours in the north. When, in 1770, the whole nation had united almost as one man, against what was then called the SCOTCH influence, the Doctor was not afraid to address his countrymen in these words: " To misrepresent the actions " and opinions of their enemies is common to every *faction*, but the " insolence of invective, and the brutality of reproach which have " lately prevailed, are peculiar to YOURS ||. " Was not this telling them in very plain terms, that no such impudent scoundrels had ever deformed civil society.

A rhymester of the last century versified the virtues of Judge Jeffries, and Dr Johnson asks " What more could have been done by the " meanest zealot for prerogative ††. " The Doctor himself has " done more " by praising Laud, who did infinitely greater mischief than Jeffries. In a poem to be quoted immediately, the Doctor puts this pathetic question, " *What murdered Wentworth.* " He was the victim

† Rambler, No. 106.

‡ Taxation no Tyranny.

§ Vide False Alarm.

|| Ibid, in his text it is *this*.—I have altered the pronoun, but neither the meaning nor even the force of the sentence.

†† Life of Dryden.

victim of national justice; a shameless deserter from the cause of his constituents; the secret adviser, and the avowed instrument of despotick power †. He possessed great vigour and capacity; it was therefore prudent to lop him off as soon as possible.

In Dr Johnson's life of Waller we learn, that Mr Hambden was "the zealot of rebellion." The great men who fought and died for the liberties of England, are every where stigmatized as criminals and traitors ‡.

"Nor deem when *Learning* her last prize bestows,
 "The glittering eminence exempt from woes;
 "See, when the vulgar 'scape, despis'd or aw'd,
 "REBELLION's vengeful talons seize on *Laud*.
 "From meaner minds, tho' smaller fines content
 "The plunder'd palace or sequester'd rent,
 "Mark'd out by dangerous parts he meets the shock,
 "And fatal *Learning* leads him to the block:
 "Around his tomb let art and genius weep,
 "But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep §."

Mr Hume allows, that *Laud* was to the last degree superstitious, proud, insolent, tyrannical, and revengeful; that his animosity was equally implacable against the Bishop of Lincoln, and the King's Jester; that he possessed but a very moderate share of *LEARNING*, abilities, or virtue; that "this was the man who acquired so great an ascendant over Charles, and who *LED* him, by the facility of his temper, into a conduct which proved so fatal to himself, and to his kingdoms ||." *If that be true, which no body doubts*, England may attribute the ruin of the late royal family, her continental wars, and her national debt, to the ambition of this spiritual usurper. His publick measures were unfortunate. His private character was truly diabolical. Mr Hume fills several pages with proofs of his impious pride *, his ridiculous superstition, his savage cruelty. Yet even this horrid picture was finished by *the hand of a friend*. What then must it be, when exhibited by the Bishop's enemies? And what must we think of that "Scribbler for a party," who condescended to celebrate so wretched a character? *PERHAPS* the Idler might have been as honourably employed in acting as a Commissioner of Excise.

It was a noted saying of *Laud's*, That *He hoped to see the day when ne'er a Jack Gentleman in England should dare to stand with his hat on in a parson's presence*, though it is very possible that the said parson had once been fed by the crumbs from his table. (*Vid. Independent Whig*.) The prelate was reputed so firm a friend to the Roman

† *Vide* Hume, vol. 6. page 418, note 2.—And several other passages in the same book.

‡ *Vide* Lives of Cowley, Waller and Milton.

§ *Vanity of Human Wishes*, a poem.

|| History of England, 8vo. edition, 1778, vol. 6. page 285.

* *Ibid*.—Ceremonies at the Consecration of St Catharine's Church.

man Catholicks, that the pope offered to make him a cardinal. But his projects were not at that time ripe for him to accept this honour. His intended fabrick of ecclesiastical grandeur must have been erected on the ruins of learning, liberty, and common sense. Yet even, in this age, we have been insulted with lamentations for his downfall; and the most insidious artifices have been exerted to darken the glory of his antagonists. Comparing it with the preceding, the manners of his age were very mild. His king had honour and humanity; yet he overlooked this example of moderation, and drove many thousands of poor dissenters into the desarts of North America. This was horrid. His barbarity went a great deal farther. He had made them beggars. He resolved to make them slaves. The desire of freedom impelled them to pass the Atlantick. He would not permit them to fly. He refused a licence to Cromwell, and to some leaders of that party; and they remained in *the house of bondage*. But the souls of these illustrious Englishmen were a match for their misfortunes. They rejected with disdain the slavish maxims of superstitious pedants. Like Cæsar, they saw their own importance, and they were determined to assert it. With a spirit becoming the dignity of their ancestors, they drew their swords, and rushed into the field of battle to purchase independence or death. They braved, and they surmounted every form of danger. They protected a monument of liberty † more glorious, and (we trust) destined to be more durable than Rome or Athens had ever seen. They did not, like Cataline, court the foes of their country. They did not, like Marius, assemble a band of criminals to insult her ashes. They did not, like his infernal pupil and conqueror, extirpate captive armies in cool blood; nor did they, like the virtuous Brutus, pollute their hands with the carnage of a generous, an admired, and a magnanimous benefactor. But they wrested the rod of iron from the hands of their hoary tyrant ‡. They dragged him from an exaltation which his ambition had abused. They held him forth as a terrible *admonition* to a proud, oppressive priesthood. They taught him to suffer those miseries, which he had so often and so wantonly inflicted. And, with infinite propriety, they conducted him to the scaffold. Yet such examples of well-deserved vengeance were seldom exhibited. Conscious that their king was only their fellow-citizen, they did not forget that his soldiers were so likewise. Fraud and rapine increased of necessity; for these men, like ourselves, were selfish and corrupted. But no Beaton, no Jeffries, arose to darken the page of their historian, to trample on every form of justice, and aggravate the miseries of discord. Perhaps no contest carried on between domestick enemies so inveterate and persevering, was ever so seldom stained with actions of atrocious cruelty. Nor have the people of England since that period supported any civil war, with equal spirit, or with equal tenderness. A reader who is familiar
with

† The British House of Commons.

‡ Laud.

with the improvements of happier and politer times will be surpris'd to hear that these *fanatics*, as we sometimes term them, never fired at flags of truce, or insulted the bodies of the slain. When they had won a battle, they did not hang up their prisoners, that they might enjoy their estates, or torture them that they might enjoy their agonies. The companions of Fairfax and Hambden, did not flinch from their enemies in the field, and fire on them from behind the bushes. They met their oppressor face to face. The combat was supported with equal courage; and, in the moment of victory, English valour was more than once forced to yield to the last efforts of English despair. But neither side was base enough to riot in the blood of the helpless. They disdained to tarnish the glory of their arms, by a series of barbarities unheard of in the blackest annals of human guilt.

In this field of renown, the Scots reaped but few laurels. The presbyterians did not overflow with courage, principle, or pity. In comparison with those of their neighbours, their own injuries were but slight, and the fullest satisfaction had been afforded; but, like the defenders of English freedom, they knew not where to stop, and selfishness, rather than ambition, pressed them on to projects the wildest and most criminal. Destitute of equal wisdom or intrepidity, they displayed whatever was mean, vulgar, and odious, in the sectaries of England. Their ignorance, or contempt of letters and philosophy, their perpetual prostitution of Christianity to cover the vilest purposes, their idolatrous veneration for a woman, who was evidently mad, their proud, implacable, Jewish spirit, their ignominious flight from Dunbar, the murder of Montrose, and of so many brave men, who had often chaced them from the field; and above all, the sale of their king, accompanied, as it was, with every imaginable aggravation of baseness, while it exhibits a scene of inexpressible infamy, ought to humble and extinguish the pride of our nation.

“As the last *Idler* is published in the solemn week which the christian world have always set a-part for the examination of the conscience,—I hope that my readers are already disposed †,” &c. By this definition, the English dissenters, the Scots, the Dutch, the greater part of the Swiss Cantons, and the most populous provinces of North America, are excluded from “the christian world.” Bigotry is the worst feature in the Doctor’s character. And the spirit of persecution deserves to be hooted with abhorrence round the globe. The profane are obliged to own that religion is infinitely comfortable to mankind, and that genuine christianity is by far the mildest and most rational of religious systems, but they shudder to think, that a thousand pitched battles have been fought; that ten thousand cities have sunk in ashes and blood; that a million of gibbets

† *Idler*, No. 104.

bets have been erected; and an hundred millions of throats cut, in consequence of its corruptions †.

“The solemn week” is seldom set a-part for the examination of conscience. Honest John Bull

First of Devotion makes a short essay,

Then hastens to be drunk;—the business of the day!

Our author seems not to have enjoyed *the tenuity of defecated air* ‡, when he composed the “last Idler.”

S E C T. VIII.

IN compiling a dictionary, by far the most difficult and important part of an author's task, is that of explaining the meaning of the words. This portion of his work Dr Johnson has, (I think) performed with very little success. He tells us, that *white*, the noun substantive signifies, “the *albugineous* part of an egg.” Taste is “*gustation*.” Suds, “a *lixivium* of soap and water.” A mill, “an engine or fabrick in which corn is *comminuted*.” A millcog, “The *denticulations*, &c.” Milk, “An *emulsion*,” &c.

What would Lord Bacon have said or thought, had he heard our author summon him to prove, that a milk-pan was “a vessel in which milk is kept in the dairy.” Mr Locke would not have been very proud to hear himself introduced, as affirming that milk pottage is “food made by boiling milk with “water and oat-meal.” Bacon would no doubt term Dr Johnson *a creature patched up of hard words*, and compare some of his imitators to “asses standing under a tree.” Mr Lock has already || afforded us *his* opinion in the most explicit, forcible, and humiliating language. But common sense does not stand in need even of so great a man's authority.

For his absurdities on this head, our author has composed, in his preface, an elaborate apology. His prolix and confused reveries cannot convince, but they fatigue and disgust, and the unhappy reader is eager to turn over the page as fast as possible. Suppose that a preacher, in haranguing his audience, should explain some of the misty passages in St Paul, by reading them in the Greek text, would not every person conclude him only fit for Bedlam! What better is it in Dr Johnson to explain the plainest words by the most obscure! *Burial*, by *sepulture*; *Drier*, by *desiccative*; *Dryness*, by *siccity*, or *aridity*; *Fit*, by *paroxysm*; to *cheer*, to *exhilarate*; and so on. All this is the

† The reader who is acquainted with Church History will admit this calculation to be very moderate.

‡ Rambler, No. 117.

|| *Vid. Essay, &c. book III. chap. 4. sect. 6. quoted in Deformities, 2d edit. p. 69.*

the most stupid pedantick nonsense imaginable; and all that he says in three folio pages will not convince us, that this is the way to explain words.

I shall proceed to give a variety of quotations from the Doctor's book. They will occupy a considerable space, but they will ascertain whether his dictionary is, or is not a work of value. I have left out some parts of the definitions of about three or four of the vocables.

A Shell, Dr Johnson says, is, "The covering of a *testaceous* or *crustaceous* animal."—Shell-fish. "Fish invested with a hard covering, either testaceous, as oysters, or crustaceous, as lobsters."—Testaceous, "consisting of shells; composed of shells." Oyster. "A bivalve testaceous fish."—Muscle. "A bivalve shell fish †."—Cockle. "A small testaceous fish."—Lobster. "A crustaceous fish."—Grapple. "A Crab fish."—Crab. "A crustaceous fish."—Craw-fish. "A small crustaceous fish found in brooks."—Cray fish (See *Craw-fish*), "The River Lobster."—Prawn. "A small crustaceous fish like a shrimp, but larger."—Shrimp. "A small *caustaceous vermiculated* fish."—Tortoise. "An animal covered with a hard shell."—Periwinkle. "A small shell fish; a kind of fish-snail."—Cockled. "Shelled, or turbinated."—Cochleated. "Of a screwed, or turbinated form."—Limpet. "A kind of shell-fish."—Crust. "Any shell, or external coat; an *incrustation*; collection of matter into a hard body."—Turbinated. "Twisted, spiral."—Twisted. "Contorted, convolved."—Contorted. "Twisted, writhed."—Spiral. "Curve, inflected."

Of these definitions the greater part convey no meaning to the common reader. Most of them would answer many other words, as well as those to which they are applied; and the rest are explained by each other, which is no explanation at all; for surely one may as well pretend to explain a thing by itself, and say that *twisted* is *twisted*, as that *twisted* is *contorted*, and *contorted*, *twisted*. A *Limpet* is an animal covered with a hard shell, as well as a *Tortoise*, and a *Tortoise*, again is a kind of *shell-fish*, as well as a *Limpet*, though, as it is an amphibious animal, the Doctor did not venture to call it a fish. That must be a very strange way of defining, where no distinction is made between creatures so widely different as a limpet and a tortoise. To attempt, in a book of this kind, to define a thing so well known as a cockle, discovers a very childish love of words. But when, with all his noise, he cannot specify the difference between a *cockle* and an *oyster*, or between an oyster and a muscle, &c. we can scarcely help despising such an awkward ostentation of learning. A crust is

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† When muscles, and some other shell fish are bedded in the sand without the low water mark, their shells open as the tide rises. When it reaches them, they receive what water they want, and gradually shut again as the sea retires. This circumstance the Doctor might have read in the great page of nature, and it would not have dishonoured his dictionary.

an *incrustation* ; or, a collection of matter into a hard body. But this last definition answers equally well to the rock of Gibraltar, and to a pye-crust. When he says that a *crust* is " any shell, or external coat," we may ask him, whether *his* external coat be a shell ; and what we are to learn by so vague an expression. That he thinks a crust and a suit of cloaths are words of the same meaning is absolutely true ; for a crust, as we have seen, is an *incrustation*, and that again is, in the proper place, defined to be an *adherent covering* ; something superinduced, which answers one's cloaths exactly. But we are still farther edified ; for it likewise applies to the hair, the skin, the plaster of a house, or a house itself ; for all these are in the clearest and most perfect sense of the language, "*adherent coverings, and something superinduced.*" I would be glad to hear him give his distinction between that which is composed of shells, and that which consists of shells. He founders on the very threshold of common sense. By the way, this last mentioned word, though so proper and emphatick, is, as well as many others, wanting in his dictionary ; and its omission is perhaps the greatest proof of *common sense* to be found in his works. For whoever hath a glimmering of common sense must abhor him as her eternal enemy.

We have seen what he is able to say on shells, and shell-fish, we proceed to a subject, if possible, yet more simple, which cannot escape the notice of any man in the use of his five senses, and on which one must carry pedantry very far, before he can cease to be intelligible and instructive.

Oak. " The oak-tree hath male flowers. The embryos afterward become acorns in hard scaly cups ; the leaves are *serrated*. The species are *five*."—Elm. " The name of a tree."—Ash. " A tree."—Beech. " A tree."—Birch. " A tree."—Cherry, Cherry-tree. " A tree and fruit."—Chesnut, Chesnut-tree. " A tree. The fruit of the Chesnut-tree."—Fir. " *The tree of which deal-boards are made.*"—Hornbeam. " A tree."—Box. " A tree."—Pine. " A tree."—Platane. " A plane-tree."—Plane-tree. " The introduction of this tree into England is owing to the great Lord Chancellor Bacon."—Hazel. " A nut-tree."—Willow. " A tree worn by forlorn lovers."—Sycamine, sycamore. " A tree."—Poplar. " A tree."—Laurel. " A tree, called also the Cherrybay."—Cherrybay. " Laurel"—Pear-tree. " The tree that bears pears."—Fig. " A tree that bears figs. " The fruit of the fig-tree."—Maple. " A tree frequent in hedge-rows."—Lime. " The Linden-tree."—Linden. " The Lime-tree."—Olive. " A plant producing oil ; the emblem of peace."—Yew. " A tree of tough-wood."—Ivy. " A plant."—Thorn. 1. " A prickly tree of several kinds. 2. " A prickle growing on the Thorn-bush."—Holly. " A tree."—Citron-tree. " One sort with a pointed fruit is in great esteem."—Cedar. " A tree. It is ever green, the leaves

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are

"are much narrower than those of the Pine-tree, and many of them produced out of one *tubercle*; it hath male flowers. The seeds are produced in large cones, *squamosæ* and *turbinated*."—Apricot, or Apricock. "A kind of wall-fruit."—Pomegranate. 1. "The tree." 2. The fruit."—Crab. "A wild Apple. The tree that bears a wild apple."—Cork. "A *glandiferous* tree, in all respects like the *Ilex*, excepting the bark."—*Ilex*. "The scarlet-oak."—*Scarlet-oak*. "The *Ilex*, a species of Oak."—Service. "A tree and fruit."—Horse-chefnut. "A plant."—Larch. "A tree."—Lote-tree, or Nettle-tree. "A tree."—Judas-tree. "A plant."—Beam-tree. "*Wild Service*," which is *not* inferted. Wild Olive. "A plant."—Tulip-tree. "A tree."—Acacia. "A tree commonly so called here."—Vine. "The *plant* that bears the grape."—Juniper. "A plant. The berries are powerful attenuants, diuretics, and carminatives."—Almond-tree. "It has leaves and flowers very like those of the Peach-tree."—Aloes. "A tree which grows in hot countries."—Myrtle. "A fragrant tree."—Ague-tree. From *ague* and *tree*. Sassafras. "Sassafras. "A tree. One of the species of the Cornelian Cherry."—Cornel, Cornelian-tree. "The *Cornel-tree* beareth the fruit, commonly called the Cornel, or Cornelian Cherry."—Yoke-elm. "A tree."—Candlebury-tree. "Sweet Willow."—Sweet Willow. "Gale, or Dutch Myrtle."—Cashew-nut. "A tree."—Chastetree. "A tree."—Bay. "A tree."—Honeyfuckle. "Woodbine."—Woodbine. "Honeyfuckle."—Ople-tree. "A tree."—Tree. "A large vegetable rising, with one woody stem, to a considerable height."—Plant. "Any thing produced from seed; any vegetable production."

These quotations are a very fair sample of the Doctor's genius and learning, and from them no man will have a great opinion of either. As all here said is so well known already, that it was not worth repeating, or is buried in scientifick terms, which few understand, or is false in fact; for when we trace this author through all his frivolous and useless variations, we discover that his imperfections are equal to his pedantry. Of the Ash, and more than twenty others in the above list, we are only told that they are *trees*. Of several, we only learn, that they are *plants*; and what difference does the Doctor mean to specify between a *plant* and a *tree*. The Horse Cheshnut is a *tree* as well as a *plant*. And the Larch again is a *plant* as well as a *tree*. Indeed the Doctor himself is a plant, if we understand his explanation of that word; for he was unquestionably *produced by seed*, and so was a whale, and therefore every animal is a *plant*.

His childish variations appear in the fullest light. Of *Ash* he could only say that it was a *tree*, but of an *Elm* he dare not say so much; *Elm* is only the *name* of a tree. And indeed every noun in his book is but a name; and the reader is in no danger of mistaking the name for the tree itself. A *Hazel* is a *Nut tree*, but so are the Cheshnut,

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the Walnut, &c. The *Fir* is not the only wood of which deal boards are made, though the Doctor seems to think it is. The *Linden* is the *Lime*, and the *Lime* is the *Linden*. The Cork-tree resembles an *Ilex*. An *Ilex* is a *Scarlet-Oak*, and a *Scarlet-Oak* is an *Ilex*. The *Laurel* is a tree also called the *Cherry-bay*, and the *Cherry-bay* is *Laurel*. *Willow* is a tree worn by forlorn lovers. The Doctor knows best whether ever he wore the willow. But the custom is not frequent, nor is it clear how any body can wear a tree, though they may wear some of its boughs. A Pear-tree bears pears. A Fig tree bears figs. And to be sure we never knew this till we heard it from Dr Johnson. *Acacia* is a tree commonly so called here, but every other tree in the Dictionary is, or ought to be, called by the name common in this country. The *Maple* is frequent in hedge rows, and so are the *Fir*, the *Crab*, the *Thorn*, the *Holly*, and many others, as well as the *Maple*. An *Olive* is not now an emblem of peace. There are other trees tough as well as *Yew*; but there is no end of detecting the Doctor's frivolous repetitions, his distinctions which he cannot distinguish, and his definitions that define nothing.

This author picques himself on his learning; yet what is a common reader the wiser for hearing that the *Oak* has male flowers; that the leaves are *sinuated*, and that the species are *five*. The species of this tree are not five only, but seventeen; besides many others mentioned by different writers, of less value and beauty, or only mere seminal variations†: and from this we may compute how little the Doctor knows what he is talking of. That the leaves are *sinuated* is a most trifling circumstance, for who but a botanist or a fool is interested in the projections of a leaf. An *Oak* must have female as well as male flowers, and upon the same plant, for it belongs to the class of *Monœcia Polyandria*. Vid. Linnæus Gen. Pl. 1070. The brain of a man of sense repels such trifles; they cannot stick in his memory. But whatever subject writers handle, "they might take care to inform themselves, before they attempt to inform others‡."

The leaves of a *Cedar* are, he says, much narrower than those of a *Pine* tree; but of *Pine* leaves we hear nothing. *Squamoſe* and *turbinated* are words out of place in a book intended for common use. What he says of *Junipers* is intelligible to an apothecary, and to him only. An *Almond* tree has leaves like the *Peach* tree, but this article is not inserted. Indeed the Doctor more than once explains one word by another which is omitted. Many trees grow in hot countries as well as *Aloes*, and others are fragrant no less than *Myrtle*. A tree is a large vegetable; but this epithet loses all meaning, when applied indiscriminately to such different objects, as the *Hazel*, and the *Cedar*. "A tree" he says, "rises with one woody stem." but when cut close by

† Vid. Boucher on Forest Trees.

‡ Idler, No. 85.

by the roots it rises on many stems, yet continues a single tree. He might have said in general that *a tree is the largest genus of vegetables*.

It is really strange that on so plain a subject the Doctor found so little to say, and that what he hath said hath so very little meaning. Every carpenter in England could have informed him, that Hornbeam, for instance, is an Evergreen; that it resists the wind remarkably; that it grows on the coldest hills, and in the worst soil, better than almost any other tree; that the wood is white, tough and flexible, and that it burns as clear as a candle. Since he wanted to talk of the species of trees, he might have said, that of Ash there are 10, of Thorn 23, of Acacia 30, and of Holly 35 species; and of Larch, that on this wood Raphael exhibited his art, before the use of canvas in painting began to be known †.

Whoever imagines the Doctor to be a man of general learning, will not be more surpris'd at his numerous mistakes, than his numerous omissions. The Mahogany, the Pimento, the Hickery, the Cassia, the Coffee, and Tea trees, are all wanting. The Sagou, and Bread-fruit trees, so singular and so valuable, are not inserted, nor the Laburnum, or the Tallow tree, or the Tacamahanca, which bears our severest winters, and is very much used by physicians in the West Indies. An Apple, a Plum, a Peach, and an Orange, are all mentioned, while, by the most unpardonable negligence, the trees themselves are forgot.

S E C T. IX.

THE preface to Dr Johnson's Dictionary has been admired as a masterpiece of fine writing. To illustrate some of its beauties is the business of the present section.

The first sentence displays a parade of words that have little meaning. Our author's description of the desperate misery of the poor is not well founded. Poverty very seldom excludes "hope of praise, and prospect of good †." And on the other hand, the prime minister of England is a thousand times more "exposed to censure, without hope of praise," than the "*lowest*" individual in the kingdom. Even the finisher of human laws himself, though every community considers him as the vilest of her members, will not exert his "diligence without reward."

"Every other author may aspire to praise; the Lexicographer can
" only

† *Vid* Boucher. ‡ Is *good* ever taken as a substantive? When we say "no good," it is only an abbreviation for "nothing good." His expression I apprehend to be ungrammatical and vulgar.

"only hope to escape reproach." Ainsworth and many others have been abundantly praised.

The next paragraph makes a great deal of noise. "The English language has been hitherto *neglected*." &c. &c. &c. The rest of the sentence is not worth the labour of transcription. It implies a severe censure on every author who had the misfortune to precede the Doctor. After all, it is not very clear how a language can possibly be *neglected*, "while it is employed in the cultivation of every species of literature."

"When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech copious without order, and energetick without rules: wherever I turned my view there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulterations were to be detected, without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority."

Nothing can exceed Dr Johnson's merit except his modesty. Read the foregoing period with attention, and you will find the meaning of it to be. That when this great author *first* † surveyed our language, he could see nothing around him but a mass of confusion. No man knew any thing of grammar, or at least, the most lucky knew so little that he could find no "established principle of selection." He arrogates to himself a degree of discernment, with which, it seems, no person of this or any former age had been ever blessed. He fairly implies, or rather affirms, that Pope, Addison, and *all* our fine writers, had no "settled test of purity." And do you really think that all this is true, and that Addison, Young, and Bolingbroke were in want of assistance to learn the rules of grammar from this modest, important, well-bred pedant. You must pause a few moments in silence and astonishment, before your fancy can conceive the full extent of his folly, vanity, and impertience ‡.

The boastful period that immediately follows will not repay a perusal. In the subsequent one he engages to teach us the mysterious art of spelling, "which has been to this time unsettled and *fortuitous*," when in the hands of such accomplished pedants as Mr Elphinstone and himself. But Orthography, among ordinary writers, has been very well settled, since, long before the Doctor was born. In every English book, printed within the present century, an uniform mode of spelling is adopted; and is the man weak enough to fancy, or mad enough to affirm, that Swift, and Smollet, and Kaimes, and Chesterfield,

† His *last* survey will find matters mended, but not in consequence of his labours. What *adulterations* has he detected, and where?

‡ Our best writers have no doubt committed many errors in grammar, but so has the Doctor himself, as we shall see in another place.

field, were in want of such help as *he* could afford them in order to *spell* their native language? If this is not exactly his meaning, let him for once descend to the level of a Scottish intellect, and compile *Clavis Johnsoniana*; such a book is much wanted among his admirers.

After strutting through a folio page upon this subject, and telling us that he is a scholar and a grammarian, he betrays all at once his assumed importance and his real insignificance. "In this part of the work, where caprice has long wanted without controul, and *vanity*" (resembling his own) "sought praise by petty reformation, I have attempted few alterations." What then was the purpose of remarking that our mode of spelling had been hitherto "unsettled" and fortuitous." It is to continue, it seems, in that situation; and thus, after telling how much we stood in need of his help, we are told how little he has attempted to help us, and in the same page he proceeds in the old stile to censure innovators, and recommend "steadiness and uniformity."

The matter of fact is this. The Doctor, like many before him, that he may increase his own consequence, laments evils which have no existence. The language contains about *forty thousand* words; of these, a dozen, or perhaps fifty, are spelt with the variation, for the most part only of a single vowel, such as *entire* and *inquiry*. This trifling circumstance is mentioned by Chesterfield, who tells his son, that authors of equal authority adopt different orthographies, and that he may, with equal safety, follow either.

A foreigner must form a strange opinion of the authors of this island, when he hears that our language is "copious without order, "and energetick without rules," and that wherever he may turn his view, "there is perplexity to be disentangled, confusion to be regulated, and choice to be made out of boundless variety, without "any established principle of selection." And when he is informed that orthography among us is likewise unsettled and fortuitous, he will renounce every hope and wish to acquire such a fluctuating jargon.

"I have directed the pronunciation, by putting an accent upon "the acute or elevated syllable." As the Doctor's book is deformed by every other imaginable species of errors, we have little reason *to put our trust in him* as to this point. Accordingly I have seen in a magazine a long catalogue of his blunders in marking the accent.

"The derivatives I have referred to their primitives, with an accuracy sometimes needless; for who does not see that *remoteness* "comes from *remote*, *lovely* from *Love*, *Concavity* from *concave*, and "demonstrative from *demonstrate*; but this grammatical exuberance "the scheme of my work did not allow me to repress."

The scheme was to make his book as big as possible; but allowing, (which is denied), that this wretched redundancy was necessary in the folio edition, why is it continued in the octavo abridgement, a book professedly

professedly written merely for common use. He himself allows that his *accuracy*, as he calls it, was sometimes needless. It was perhaps always so.

"The words which our authours have introduced by their knowledge of foreign languages, or ignorance of their own, by vanity or wantonness, by compliance with fashion, or lust of innovation, I have registered as they occurred, though commonly only to censure them, and warn others against the folly of naturalizing useless foreigners, to the injury of the natives."

The Doctor has inserted a great number of barbarous words. This achievement, had his book ever been consulted, must have had very bad consequences. Of the censures which he speaks about, I have never met with any specimens. I dare not absolutely deny their existence; but I can safely affirm that such *censures* are wanting in five hundred passages where they ought to have been inserted. In the octavo abridgement, no censures of bad words are to be found; yet I believe, that every vocable inserted in the folio, is inserted there. Now, if they are to be reprobated in the folio book, why are they not to be likewise condemned in the octavo edition? To this question Dr Johnson's best friend will not be able to make a proper answer.

He proceeds a little after to pass a severe censure on Junius, a grammarian, "whose learning is very often disgraced by his absurdities." The specimens which he produces in support of his opinion, have a lively resemblance to his own sustian. Both these men had been better employed at the forge or the plow, in extending the commerce, or defending the freedom of their country.

As a specimen of consummate nonsense, a professor of rhetoric has frequently recited the following passage. "When the radical idea branches out into parallel *ramifications*, how can a consecutive series be formed of senses in their nature collateral?" Within the narrow limits of this preface, the reader will find many passages involved in such impenetrable darkness. Dr Johnson well knows, that in the mass of mankind, there is a propensity to admire what cannot be understood. But from many hints which he lets fall, we are sufficiently cautioned of what we have to expect in perusing his work. He damns it in the most copious and forcible terms. Some of his expressions have already been quoted*. He confesses, "that many terms appropriated to particular occupations, though necessary and significant, are undoubtedly omitted." This is bad enough; but mark what follows. "Of the words most studiously exemplified, many senses have escaped observation." If the Doctor's definitions are so defective when he has exerted himself to the utmost, what are we to look for when he is in a fit of laziness? "The examples are too often injudiciously truncated, and perhaps sometimes, I hope very rarely, alledged in a mistaken sense†; for, in making this collection, I trusted

* *Vid. Deformities.*

† His examples about a theorem diametrically contradict his definition of the word. *Vid. Deformities, &c.*

“ more to memory, than in a state of disquiet and embarrassment, memory can contain, and purposed to supply, at the review, what was left incomplete in the first transcription.” He never, it seems, reviewed his collection, and yet after all these copious confessions of his carelessness, he adds, within less than a page, “ Despondency has never so far prevailed as to depress me to *negligence*.”

S E C T. X.

“ THE perusal of *Paradise Lost* is a duty rather than a pleasure. “ We read MILTON for instruction, and retire *harassed* and “ *overburdened*.” Perhaps the reader will be surprised that any man who has the least pretensions to taste should venture to publish such an opinion. And though the sixth book of that poem has been celebrated as a master-piece by every other critick; yet the Doctor does not scruple to say “ that the book is, *I believe*, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increased.” He seems to alter his sentiments a little after, vindicates Milton with great zeal, and says “ What other author ever soared so high, or sustained his flight so long ?” But if Milton did not soar in his description of the celestial battles, Addison may be quoted to prove, that he never *soared* at all ! The wit of Voltaire, and the eloquence of Smith, are not surely requisite to make the reader smile at such inconsistencies.

“ This poem has, by the nature of it’s subject, the advantage above “ all others, that it is universally and perpetually interesting.” Be it so; but then, “ the want of human *interest* is always felt. The reader “ finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can, by any effort of imagination, place himself * ; he has therefore little natural curiosity or sympathy.—*Paradise Lost* is one of the books which the reader admires, and lays “ down, and forgets to take up again.” These passages are in the directest contradiction. A more ridiculous inconsistency eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can it enter into the mind of man to conceive.

It is *possible* that hereafter a historian may arise, who shall pay as little respect, as our author himself, to truth and consistency. A character of the King of Prussia, written by such a hand, may serve as a contrast to what Lexiphanes says of Milton. “ Frederick the Great, “ was a fortunate commander, and a consummate politician; but the “ splendor of his reign was eclipsed by many clouds. His repulse at “ Rossbach, his cowardice at Cunnersdorff, his temerity at Torgau, “ his wretched and ruinous flight from the fields of Custrim and Lissa,

* It requires no great stretch of fancy for any man to put himself in the situation of our ancestor. Adam is not the only man who has been ruined by the impertinent curiosity and vanity of his wife.

" Lissa, reflect infinite disgrace on his courage as a soldier, and his
 " conduct as a general ; but we admire the justice of his cause, his
 " compassion for the sufferings of the Saxon peasants, and his happy vi-
 " gilance at Schweidnitz and Hochkirchen. Prudence herself dictated
 " his decampment from the siege of Prague, in order to attack Count
 " Daun ; and honour and humanity must have inspired his decrees
 " at the gates of Dantzick. As a Christian, his piety was conspicu-
 " ous. Like every man of sense, he believed in every thing reputed
 " essential to the salvation of his soul ; but, like many pious persons,
 " he sometimes rejected *the beggarly assistance of good works*. His
 " tenderness to mankind was often testified by his tears. It is indeed
 " undeniable, that his ambition sacrificed the lives of five or six hun-
 " dred thousand Prussians, as the price of a province to which he had
 " no title. But then these heroes died in the bed of honour, and
 " added, by their blood, to the glory of their king. Besides, they
 " involved, in their fall, the fate of at least a million and an half
 " of his Majesty's enemies, not to mention the numberless multi-
 " tudes whom they prevented from seeing the light. It has been af-
 " firmed, that our hero's conduct in Poland was altogether shameless * ;
 " and calumny has compared him to Zingis and Timur. It has been
 " pretended, that since the godly first began to cut each other's throats
 " about the creed of Athanasius, nothing equal to his barbarity was
 " ever known ; and that, with an impudence till then unheard of, he
 " declared, at his own table, that *he was a robber by profession* †.
 " But let us remember that his numerous, elegant, and respectable
 " publications as an author, his zeal for the protestant cause, his at-
 " tention to the discipline of his troops, his admirable plans of inter-
 " nal police, his astonishing success in the field, his generosity to men
 " of learning, his affair with the miller's wife, and his inimitable
 " tenderness for his own, as well as many other *favourable circum-*
 " *stances* in his story, though they cannot ascertain the existence of
 " his taste or abilities, illustrate the purity of his intentions, the mo-
 " deration of his wishes, and the supreme excellence of his heart."

You may be tempted to smile at the absurdity of this portrait ; yet
 it is not, in any degree, more absurd, than what our author says of
 Milton, and many others. Attend only to one other extract from his
 account of that celebrated man.

" The antient epick poets were very unskillful teachers of virtue.
 " From their works the reader may rise with a greater degree of ac-
 " tive or passive fortitude, and sometimes of prudence ; but he will
 " be able to carry away *few* precepts of justice, and *none* of mercy."
 This remark displays great *perspicacity*. Every word of it merits a
 stanza from the pen of the laureate. Indeed it very much resembles
 a tale,

* Annual Register for 1772.

† English Review for May 1783.

Told by an idiot, full of noise and fury,
Which means but nothing.

The following passage will *ratify* the Doctor's opinion.

" The day that to the shades the father sends,
" Robs the sad orphan of his father's friends :
" He, wretched outcast of mankind, appears,
" Forever sad, forever bath'd in tears ;
" While those his father's former bounty fed,
" Nor lift the goblet, nor divide the bread.
" The kindest but his present wants allay,
" To leave him wretched the succeeding day.
" Frugal compassion ! Heedless they who boast,
" Both parents still, nor know what he has lost ;
" Shall cry, *Be gone, thy father feasts not here,*
" The wretch obeys, retiring with a tear."

It is evident that these verses inculcate neither justice nor mercy. A thousand similar to them may be quoted from " the ancient epick poets." The reader will be at a loss to conceive a wilder outrage on truth, than some of the specimens now quoted ; yet one of the reviewers affirms, that Dr Johnson's remarks on *Paradise Lost*, display the acuteness and accuracy of Aristotle, with the spirit and sublimity of Longinus. But still it is not certain, that this critick was acquainted with the Greek writers whom he mentions with so much freedom. It is to be hoped, for the honour of his taste, that he had not read our author's elegant, but incoherent declamations. He adds, that as no pen but Milton's could have written such a poem, perhaps no pen but the pensioner's could have written *such a* criticism. The last of these observations is certainly true ; for no man, except himself, ever displayed such a total contempt of truth and consistency.

Of all the absurdities ever were known,
Sure these are the greatest ! They will not go down.
If books must be judged by such odd sort of men,
Sure none but a blockhead should handle the pen.

" Shakespeare sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much
" more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write with-
" out any moral purpose. This fault the barbarity of his age cannot
" extenuate ; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world bet-
" ter, and justice is a virtue independent on time and place †." The
morality of Shakespeare's dramas has been illustrated in a book writ-
ten on that subject by a lady ; at any rate, after what Dr Johnson has
said of the epick poetry of the antients, he deserves no degree of cred-
it. Lord Kaimes has displayed at some length the superior inno-
cence

† Preface to Shakespeare.

cence and morality of Shakespeare's plays. Several of our most eminent comick writers were men void of any virtuous principle: What they wanted, Shakespeare had. Indeed the Doctor's assertion is not worth contradicting, though he himself has often contradicted it: He should have thought more, and written less.

Shakespeare "no sooner begins to move than he counteracts himself, and terror and pity, as they are rising in the mind, are checked and blasted by sudden frigidity †." We may every where meet with "men who have different opinions upon every thing past, present, and future; who deny the most notorious facts, contradict the most cogent truths, and persist in asserting to day, what they asserted yesterday, in defiance of evidence, and contempt of confutation ‡." In the same preface, a long paragraph follows immediately after, upon quibbling, which the Doctor vehemently condemns, and at the same time quibbles most egregiously. But this passage has already been quoted, criticized at full length, and damned in some of the Reviews.

In a note on Romeo and Juliet, he observes, that Shakespeare's personages have *a conceit left them in their misery, a miserable conceit*. The reader may believe this or not as he pleases.

He observes, that to Shakespeare, and perhaps to Spenser, "we must ascribe the praise of having first discovered to how much smoothness and harmony the English language could be softened §" In the same preface he says, that Shakespeare, among the rest of his excellencies, "deserves to be studied as one of the ORIGINAL MASTERS of our language." After all this, we are a little surprised to hear, that Shakespeare "has corrupted language by every mode of depravation ¶." For this assertion the Doctor does not pretend to bring the least evidence; and it is not easy to say, how Shakespeare can, at the same time, be the greatest improver and the greatest corrupter of our language, which is pretty nearly the meaning of the Doctor's words. For the faults in Shakespeare's style the critick had previously apologized, by describing the unsettled state of our language in the end of the sixteenth century, so that the charge of corrupting it is very ill-founded. Many men have written trifles, many have written nonsense, and many have written lies, but did you ever hear of any man so apt to forget his own opinions, and even to contradict them, as Dr Johnson. All this often happens, as in the present case, within the limits of a single page ††. Yet the Doctor writes in the most peremptory and decisive tone.—

As who should say, *I am Sir Oracle,*
And when I am to speak let no dog bark.

The

† Preface to Shakespeare.

‡ Idler, vol. 1.

§ Preface to Shakespeare.

¶ Does not this remark apply to our author himself?

†† Fugitive Pieces, vol. 2. p. 127.

The publick have often complained of Dr Johnson's inroadings on the purity and simplicity of our language. A variety of additional evidence for the justice of this complaint, has been adduced in a late essay. Several criticisms have been written on it which are abundantly hostile. But nobody has yet pretended to point out a mutilated or unfair quotation; nobody has specified a passage where the conclusions did not evidently arise from the premisses; nobody has advanced a word in defence of the Doctor's innovations. The Critical Reviewers indeed declare, in general terms, that I had allowed the Doctor no merit either as an author or as a man. But the very first sentence in the pamphlet referred to, admits his learning and abilities, and I conclude that I have nothing to fear from a critic who writes with such an avowed contempt of truth. I now submit some passages, which are perhaps exceptionable, to the judgement of the reader.

"Milton seems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was †." &c.

"If Christina commended the defence of the people, her purpose must be to torment ‡," &c.

"The first appearance of pamphlets among us is generally thought to be at the new opposition §," &c.

"He *that* writes the life of another, is either his friend or his enemy ††." The relative *that* stands high in the Doctor's esteem. It appears instead of *who* in almost every page of his writings. Chesterfield forbids this use of it; and the common practice justifies his opinion.—The Doctor is singular in this point.

"The rovers who first *take* possession of a country, *were* contented if they could ‡‡." &c. Speaking of Rochester, our author says, "What more can be expected from a life ended before the abilities of many other men *began* to be displayed." The reader will decide whether the sentence would not conclude better as follows: "A life ended before that period, when the abilities of many other men commonly *begin*." &c. The Doctor speaks with great ostentation about his reformation of our language.—He should have begun that task by reforming his own.

"The stream of time which washes away the dissoluble fabricks of other poets, passes without injury over the adamant of Shakespeare |||." And yet every body knows, that the stream of time has done more mischief to the adamant of Shakespeare than to the works of almost any other author. Dr Johnson says, "That it is not easy for invention to bring together so many causes to vitiate the

"text,"

† Life of Milton.

‡ Ibid.

§ Fugitive Pieces, vol. 2. p. 5.

†† Idler, No. 85.—It has already been observed, that this assertion is rather unaccountable from a man who has himself written so many lives.

‡‡ Idler, No. 63.

||| Preface to Shakespeare.

"text," as united in corrupting the text of this poet. Many "other poets" have erected monuments of genius which bid fair to last as long as Othello and Julius Cæsar. The Bard of Morven is admired in France, where the beauties of Milton are hardly felt; and in Germany where the name of Shakespeare is only beginning to be known*.

The Doctor's preface concludes in these modest and respectful terms: "I should feel little solicitude about the sentence, were it to be pronounced *only* by the skilful and the learned." That is to say, *You common readers are presumptuous, insignificant, shallow fellows, but men of sense and learning will distinguish and admire MY merit.*

Dr Johnson has treated the poems of Mr Gray with great severity. For this he has been reproached in two or three publications. But in reality his subject would have entitled him to proceed to much greater lengths than he has done, in condemning that favourite author. A few extracts from Gray's verses will serve to vindicate the Doctor's opinion. Gray detested Cambridge and her inhabitants; yet, in a most servile and despicable Ode to Musick, he says,

"Lo Granta waits to lead her blooming band,
 "Not *obvious*, nor obtrusive she;
 "No vulgar praise, no *venal* incense flings.
 "Nor dares with courtly tongue refin'd
 "Profane thy inborn royalty of mind;
 "For *She* reveres herself and thee†!

If Gray wrote these verses, it could not be delicacy that made him decline the laurel. His *Bard* is clogged with no less than thirty-five marginal notes. Of the following lines, what is the meaning?

"Where his glowing eye-balls turn,
 "Thousand banners round him *burn*."

Speaking of Elizabeth, (alias *Black Bess*!) Gray says,

"In the midst a form *divine*!
 "Her eye proclaims her of the Briton line;
 "Her lion port, her awe-commanding face,
 "Attemper'd sweet to virgin grace."

Her Majesty had not "a form divine;" and did you really ever see, or hear, or dream of a lady who had the *port of a Lion*?

Omne

* The author advances this assertion on the authority of a man of letters, a native of Germany.

† The Duke of Grafton—He gave Mr Gray a professorship.

O *MNE animal post coitum triste est*, is a maxim in philosophy, which often applies equally to an author and his readers. This pamphlet has now extended to a very considerable length, if not in the number of pages, at least in the quantity of matter. I am here to bid farewell to the reader; and, as it is always agreeable to part in good humour, I shall, like the admirable author of *Lexiphanes*, conclude this performance, by inserting an original letter, which, while it instructs the wisest, will, at the same time, divert the gravest. Dr Johnson observes, That *every good action which is not recorded is a loss to posterity*. This piece records a very benevolent action. It has been refused admittance into some of the Scots Newspapers. A method occurred of preserving it, in compliance with the Doctor's judicious sentiment, by insertion here. He who finds pleasure in the perusal, will not, I hope, quarrel with me for the publication.

To _____,

" DEAR SIR,

" Having spent a long life in pursuit of pleasure and health, I am
 " now retired from the world, in poverty, and with the gout; so
 " joining with Solomon, *that all is vanity and vexation of spirit*,
 " I go to church, and say my prayers.

" I assure you, that most of us religious people reap some little sa-
 " tisfaction, in hoping, that you wealthy voluptuaries, have a fair
 " chance of being damn'd to all eternity; and Dives shall call out for
 " a drop of water to Lazarus, one drop of which he seldom tasted,
 " while he had the twelve Apostles, (twelve hogheads of claret) in
 " his cellar.

" Now, Sir, that doctrine being laid down, I wish to give you
 " (my friend) a loop-hole to creep through. Going to church last
 " Sunday, as usual, I saw an unknown face in the pulpit, and rising
 " up to prayers, as others do upon like occasion, I began to look a-
 " round the church, to find out if there were any pretty girls there,
 " when my attention was attracted by the foreign accent of the par-
 " son. I gave him my attention, and had my devotion awakened by
 " the most pathetick prayer I ever heard! This made me all atten-
 " tion to the sermon. A finer discourse never came from the lips of
 " a man. I returned in the afternoon, and heard the same preacher
 " exceed his morning-work, by the finest chain of reasoning, convey-
 " ed by the most eloquent expressions. I immediately thought, what
 " Agrippa said to Paul, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. I
 " sent to ask the man of God to honour my roof, and dine with me.
 " I asked him his country, and what not: I even asked him, If his

" sermons

“ sermons were his own composition? which he affirmed they were.
 “ I assured him, I believed it ; for no man ever wrote, or spoke so
 “ well ! “ My name,” said he, “ is Dishington. I am an assistant to an old
 “ minister in the Orkneys, who enjoys a fruitful benefice of L. 50
 “ Sterling a-year, out of which I am allowed L. 20, for preaching
 “ and instructing twelve hundred people, who live in two separate
 “ islands, out of which I pay L. 1, 5s, to the boatman who transports
 “ me from the one to the other. I should be happy, could I continue
 “ in that terrestrial paradise ! But we have a great lord, who has many
 “ little people, soliciting him for many little things that he can do,
 “ and that he cannot ; and if my minister dies, his succession is too
 “ great a prize, not to raise up many powerful rivals to stop my hopes of
 “ preferment.”—I asked him, If he possessed any other wealth ; “ yes,”
 “ says he, “ I married the prettiest girl in the island ; she has blest me
 “ with three children, and as we are both young, may expect more ;
 “ besides, I am so well beloved, that I have all my peats brought carriage
 “ free. This is my story.”—Now, to the prayer of my petition. I
 “ never before envy’d you the possession of the Orkneys, which I now
 “ do, only to provide for this eloquent, innocent, Apostle. The sun
 “ has refused your barren isles his kindly influence ; do not deprive
 “ them of so pleasant a preacher ; let not so great a treasure be for
 “ ever lost to that damn’d, inhospitable, country ! For I assure you, if
 “ the Archbishop of Canterbury was to hear him, or hear of him, he
 “ would do no less than make him an Archdeacon. The man has
 “ but one weakness, that of preferring the Orkneys to all the earth.
 “ This way, and no other, you have a chance for salvation : Do this
 “ man good, and he will pray for you ; this will be a better purchase
 “ than your Irish estate, or the Orkneys. I think it will help me for-
 “ ward too, since I am the man who told you of the man so worthy
 “ and deserving ; so pious, so eloquent, and whose prayers may do
 “ so much good. Till I hear from you on this head, yours, in all
 “ meekness, love, and benevolence.

P. S. “ Think what an unspeakable pleasure it will be to look down
 “ from heaven, and see Rigby, Masterton, all the Campbells, and
 “ Nabobs swimming in fire and brimstone, while you are sitting with
 “ Whitefield, and all his old women, looking beautiful, frisking and
 “ singing. All this you may have by settling this man, after the death
 “ of the incumbent.”

May, }
 1774. }

The Patron, not long after, complied with this request.

F I N I S.

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DEFORMITIES

O. F.

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SELECTED FROM HIS WORKS.

Nihil rerum mortalium tam instabile ac fluxum est, quam fama—

TACITUS.

The diversion of *baiting* an AUTHOR has the sanction of all ages and
nations, and is more lawful than the sport of teasing other *animals*,
because, for the most part, HE comes voluntarily to the stake.

7 AP 62

RAMBLER, No. 176.

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